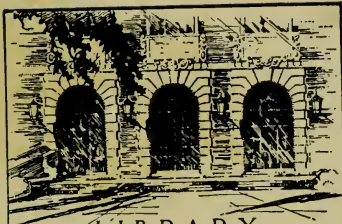






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THE
ROBERTSES ON THEIR TRAVELS.
VOL. II.

THE
ROBERTSES
ON
THEIR TRAVELS.

BY
MRS TROLLOPE,
AUTHORESS OF "THE BARNABYS IN AMERICA," "THE ATTRAC-
TIVE MAN," "THE VICAR OF WREXHILL," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE ROBERTSES

ON

THEIR TRAVELS.

CHAPTER I.

DURING the whole of these domestic discussions and manœuvrings, Bertha Harrington had been seated at a little side window of the hotel, which, opening from one of the most obscure bedrooms in it, commanded a view that made her nerves thrill with delight, and caused her with deep sincerity to bless the benignity of Providence, which, notwithstanding her dreadful sufferings, permitted her to feel with all the keenness of youthful sensation, that she had still the power of enjoyment left within her, and that it was only necessary for

her to look out upon the lovely face of nature, to taste it. Had poor Bertha suffered less, she would probably have borne with less philosophy the annoyance of being associated with people to whom, with all her gentleness, she found it was quite impossible to attach herself. But the fearful agony which every thought turned toward her Irish home was sure to bring back with it, and the horrible dread which occasionally occurred to her, that it was possible that her father might command her return, for the purpose of placing her again under the care of her deeply suspected governess, made her shrink from every thought of complaining of her present quarters, or of doing any thing that might suggest the idea of recalling her. Deep sorrow, or indeed vehement emotion of any kind, develops the faculties and the feelings at Bertha's age with wonderful rapidity; and could the mother, so suddenly and mysteriously snatched away from her, have been permitted to look back upon her as she was now, she could hardly have recognised the playful, thoughtless creature she had left, in the deeply meditative eye, and the calm and steadfast composure of countenance and demeanour, which her desolate

child now exhibited. Poor Bertha ! She must by nature have had a loving heart, or she could not have doated on her mother with such fond devotion ; but now it would have been difficult to find any human creature, of any sex or age, so thoroughly isolated in feeling, or in a state of such perfect mental solitude, as herself. She thought of all this as she sat alone at the little window of the hotel at Baden ; but instead of sinking under the oppressive feeling which this worst species of solitude is sure to produce, she called into action the more than common moral courage with which nature had happily endowed her. She felt that her position was singular and very painful, and that whatever consolation she could hope to find in it must be sought in herself alone. That the poor bereaved girl could, under such untoward circumstances, be conscious that any source of enjoyment still existed for her, was a great blessing ; that this consolation presented itself in the innocent shape of enthusiastic love for the beauties of nature, was also a great blessing ; but whether the firmness of determination which was mixed with it, and which led her to resolve that she would indulge herself in this without fear and

without restraint, however much the doing so might oblige her to insist upon freedom of will to the people among whom she was so strangely thrown—whether this too was likely to be a blessing to her may be doubted, as it could hardly fail to lead also to some eccentricity of conduct, as this, however innocent in each individual instance, can rarely be indulged in by a youthful female without peril.

At present, however, the absorbing feeling of admiration with which she sat gazing upon the objects visible from the window of the little room into which she had retreated, while the Roberts family were discussing their movements, and the masquerading manner in which they were to be performed, did her nothing but good; for there was that in the landscape which awakened too many fanciful thoughts and memories, to leave her any leisure to mourn over the perversity of the destiny which had thrown her into companionship with so much absurdity. From the time the imperial Mrs. Roberts had made it a matter of family notoriety that her summer plans included a residence of some months at Baden-Baden, Bertha Harrington, who was by no means an ignorant

girl for her age, and who already knew pretty nearly as much about this celebrated bathing-place as ordinary books could teach her, had not only fixed her fancy very ardently upon sundry exploring projects, which she fancied would be easily within her reach when she got there; but, as the information was fortunately promulgated before the party left Paris, the young romancer and antiquary had found time and opportunity to furnish herself with more than one rather recondite volume treating of Black Forest legends, of the fairy lore and diablerie of the Herrnwiesse; and though last, not least, (but rather very decidedly of foremost value amongst these new acquisitions,) of every thing she could manage to get at respecting the records of the HOLY VEHME. This last subject had long ago, while still the happy pupil of her reading mother, taken strong hold of her fancy; and the idea that she was about to pass three long-dayed summer months, when rambling is so easy and so delightful, in a region celebrated for having been the stronghold of some of its most mysterious practices, so filled her young head with visions of castles to be visited, and dungeons to be explored, that she had won-

drously little attention left for the petty annoyances which surrounded her. The excellent and truly pious resolutions which had arisen during her solemn and solitary walk in Strasbourg cathedral, contributed rather to assist than check the effect of the scenes among which she now found herself, for they led her to cherish every thought and every feeling possessed of sufficient interest to lead her meditations from the fearful theme upon which, as she well knew, she had brooded more than was good for the health either of mind or body. Never, since the terrible event which had caused her banishment from her native land, had Bertha experienced any emotion so nearly approaching to happiness as that produced by the sight of the dark forest, amidst whose shades lay hid the awful dungeons of the secret tribunal. Her mind was in no state to enjoy scenes of gay dissipation, even had she been surrounded by companions as agreeable to her taste as those now around her were the contrary. Pleasure, commonly so called, she felt to be repugnant to her inclination, and unsuitable to her condition ; but her imagination seemed to have gained all that her other faculties had lost. She longed to turn from

what was present, but in which she could take no interest, to what had passed, ages and ages ago, on the spot so widely distant from her native home, and to which accident had thus strangely brought her. And there she sat at the little window, most luxuriously forgetting how she got there, and with her fancy as free from every image connected with the race of Robertses as if none of them had ever been born. There she sat, while that high-minded family were arranging their plans; and there she would most contentedly have sat for hours longer, had not Mrs. Roberts suddenly burst in upon her, in order to summon her to take her place in the procession which had been at length arranged.

Mrs. Roberts always made a point of being very civil to Miss Harrington, and upon this occasion had addressed her in an accent of commiseration, which was quite affectionate.

“Dear me—dear me! I am afraid you must have been moped to death, my dear, sitting here so long all alone,” had been her exclamation on opening the door; civilly adding, “but you must please to excuse us all, my dear Bertha, for we

have been too busy to have any time left for politeness."

Bertha first started, as if a pistol had been fired off at her ear, and then said very eagerly,

"Oh dear no, ma'am, not the least in the world! I have been very happy indeed."

At that moment an idea which had more than once before suggested itself to the sagacious mind of Mrs. Roberts came upon her anew, with all the force of conviction.

"That girl," thought she, "is more than half an idiot; but no mortal living shall ever find it out by my help. Poor dear creature! it will be a mercy to marry her, whether she likes it or not, to the son of such a family as ours, where she will be so sure to be taken care of. Poor dear creature!"

As she mentally breathed this exclamation, Mrs. Roberts felt a pleasing sensation at her heart, not very easy to be accurately defined. She would herself, and quite sincerely, have described it as a feeling of benevolence, arising from the conviction that this weakness of mind in poor dear Bertha, would render her own watchful care

of her destiny invaluable, and make the adopting her into the bosom of her happy and highly-gifted family, one of the most amiable acts that ever was performed. Other people might have fancied the agreeable sensation to have taken its rise from a sort of prophetic consciousness that there could be no great difficulty in making such a fool marry whomever she chose to put in her way; or the source of this complacent feeling might have been twofold, and compounded, though not quite in equal portions, of both. However this may be, Mrs. Roberts did set off from the hotel to take possession of her nice lodgings in the Balcony House, in very particular good humour with herself and all the world, and with the happy persuasion that none of the fine people whom she speedily meant to adopt as her intimate friends would ever find out how she got there.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning rose in all the animating brightness of German sunshine; and it would have been difficult perhaps, even in the enjoyable and ever enjoyed retreat of Baden-Baden, to have found any party more inclined to congratulate themselves upon being there. The worthy Mr. Roberts strolled out before the hour of breakfast; and having found his way to the public rooms, and ascertained by the aid of no tongue but that which was native to him, the easy rate of subscription by which he might be admitted to all the delights they offered, came back with a smiling face to join his family at the morning meal, with

his fancy full of the beautiful acacia trees, under whose shade he might sit and read the newspaper all day long, or, by way of variety, go to sleep as much as he liked.

Mrs. Roberts, by the help of her native sagacity, aided by a few inquiries from her landlady, had ascertained that there were persons of distinction at the baths from almost every country under heaven, and that they all seemed to be living together on the most intimate terms imaginable. The two Miss Robertses had, in like manner, become equally well aware of the celibacy of one English lord, two ditto Irish, three baronets, and a very fair sprinkling of minor treasures in the same available condition. Edward was in no degree less contented than the rest of the family, and Bertha Harrington's state of mind has been already described.

“I flatter myself that you will allow I have done well for you this time,” said Mrs. Roberts, looking round the room complacently, and stirring her tea with a smooth equable movement, that seemed to emanate from the pleasant condition of her mind. “Isn't this a nice room, girls?”

“Lovely,” replied Maria, “and you might give a beautiful party in it, if we could but get acquainted with enough people.”

“It will not be very difficult to do that,” said her brother, “if we set properly about it.”

“That is the great secret, Edward,” returned his mother with an approving nod, “and we must join our wits together to see how we can set about it. The fact is, that nothing can be hoped for of any kind in the way of gaiety, unless we draw a few eyes upon us at once. Of course it will cost something, and so will our daily bread, but there is no avoiding it. You must all of you be exceedingly economical in other respects, and take the greatest possible care to save in every way that is not likely to injure our appearance in the eyes of the world.”

“You are quite right there, mamma,” said Agatha, with solemnity. “It is, in fact, the only system, as every day’s experience convinces me, by which people of moderate fortune can pass through life respectably. People who are indifferent to the opinion of their fellow-creatures are never likely to conduct themselves with propriety in any way.

Such indifference ought to be avoided by all well-disposed people; but when young women are concerned, it becomes a positive duty."

"I am sure it is a great pleasure, my dear," said her father, looking at her with great admiration, "to hear a young person of your age express herself so sensibly. It does the greatest credit to your excellent mother, and clearly proves how perfectly right she has been in giving you all the advantage of travelling into foreign parts. I am quite convinced there is nothing like it for the improvement of the mind; and I don't mean to deny that it is for the improvement of the body too, my dears, for, thank God! we all of us seem to be in perfect health, and certainly in point of looks nobody can deny the improvement."

"Thank you, papa, for my share of the compliment," said Maria. "But now," she added, "let us lose no time, but talk a little seriously about our manner of setting off. The first great question is—Are we to have a carriage? Pretty nearly every thing, in my opinion, depends upon that."

There was a moment's pause. Every eye save that of Bertha, which was fixed with decorous

gravity upon the table-cloth, turned, as by common consent, towards Mrs. Roberts.

“It *is* the first great question, Maria,” she said at length. “There can be no doubt of it.”

“And how is it to be answered, ma’am?” said Edward, rather sternly, for his heart and soul were full of delicious visions of driving—an exquisite costume for this exercise being one of his latest Parisian acquisitions. “How is it to be answered? Because a good deal will depend upon that, I promise you, as to the manner in which I shall dispose of myself.”

“I quite understand the anxiety you must all feel on the subject,” resumed Mrs. Roberts; “it is perfectly natural; for the importance of the question is immense! Nevertheless, nothing must be decided upon hastily.”

“No, no, we must not be in a hurry to plunge headlong into unnecessary expenses, my dears,” said Mr. Roberts, remembering that at that particular moment he had not, to the best of his knowledge and belief, above fifty pounds in his banker’s hands. “Travelling,” he added, “is beyond all question a most delightful and a most improving thing, but it costs a monstrous deal of

money; there is no denying that ; and a carriage costs a monstrous deal of money too, and if you will all of you take my advice, you will manage to do without it here. The country, they say, is beautiful, you know, and I am sure the weather is beautiful too, and why should you not be contented with making pleasant walking parties? Your mother is an excellent walker; and if we should be lucky enough to make some pleasant chatty acquaintances who can walk with her, I am sure she would enjoy it extremely ; and so you would too, every one of you; and therefore I don't see the good sense of running headlong into a great expense that really and truly cannot do any of you any good. There ! now I have given you my opinion, and I shall say no more about it, one way or the other."

It really required a good deal of moral courage in good Mr. Roberts to say thus much, for he knew pretty well that his advice was not likely to prove palatable to either of his *high-spirited* offspring. As to his lady, he did not by any means feel equally certain that what he had said would be displeasing to her. He most truly believed her to be one of the most accomplished

managers in the world, but as he was every day becoming more and more aware of the great abilities and corresponding strength of character (and of will) of his children, he was not without hope that by thus boldly declaring that he did not conceive a carriage necessary, he might be rendering her task of keeping them in order less difficult; but even with this hope he did not feel sufficiently easy in his mind to venture to look about him after he had ceased to speak, and therefore began very assiduously to butter and to salt, and to cut into dainty little sections, a piece of toasted bread, which, of course, obliged him to keep his eyes also earnestly fixed upon his plate.

And lucky was it for him, good man, that he did so, for it would have required a firmer spirit than he possessed to have stood unmoved the battery of eyes which at once poured forth their flashing hostility upon him. His son, who had just broken the shell of an egg, sat with his teaspoon in one hand, and his egg-cup in the other, as if suddenly turned into stone; his eyes the while distended to their utmost limits, and fixed upon his offending parent with such a mixture of rage and rebellion in their glance, as would have

shaken the old gentleman severely had he been unfortunate enough to have seen it. The whole frame of his daughter Agatha, too, quivered with angry agitation as she listened to him; and there was such a curl of her lip as she tossed her head, and turned her eyes from him towards her mother, that it required no very deep study of physiognomy to understand the appeal. Maria turned as red as scarlet, and tears, of no very tender kind, started to her eyes. As to Mrs. Roberts herself, her admiring husband might have looked her full in the face at that moment without running any risk of being frightened. She smiled with great good-humour, and she nodded her head to him in a way that he might perhaps have thought very encouraging if he had seen it: but it was quite as well that he did not, for if he had he would have been deceived by a smile, as many other good men have been before him, for, rightly interpreted, it only meant, "Go on, my dear, and say what you like; I have no wish in the world to stop you. Your opinion will not have much weight in the matter, either way." The well-behaved wife, however, said aloud immediately after, and in a tone of very proper decorum,

“It is not a question which ought to be settled in a hurry, Mr. Roberts: we will talk about it;” a reply that must have had some wisdom in it, for it satisfied every body.

“And what shall we begin with?” said Edward. “I have a dozen things in my head that must all be done, but I don’t know which to do first. I suppose you will want me, ma’am, to go to the rooms for you, and see about the subscriptions?” he added, in a whisper that was for her alone.

“I will speak to you in the next room in a moment,” she replied.

And then the breakfast proceeded satisfactorily to its conclusion, amidst a variety of laudatory remarks on the pleasant aspect of the place, and the particularly nice situation of their lodgings. A glance of the eye from the mother to the son, as the party rose from the table, caused him to stroll with an idle, lounging air into a pretty little second drawing-room, where she immediately joined him, and, having closed the door of communication, led him to the window and thus addressed him: “You behaved exceedingly well just now, Edward—exceedingly well indeed. I

give you great credit for it, my dear boy ; for I saw plainly enough what you felt, and was in a terrible fright lest you should burst out into some violent remonstrance. But you behaved beautifully, and you know well enough, Edward, that you may safely leave all such matters to me ; for, in the first place, I believe that you and I think pretty much alike on most subjects, and, in the next, there is nobody that can bring your father round, when he has got a troublesome crotchet in his head, but myself."

"Quite true, ma'am, we all know that," replied her son. "So now then, I suppose, we are to understand that we are not to be led about the high-roads like a set of dusty geese, to seek what we can find ? You mean to say that we are to have a carriage, don't you ?"

"Yes, certainly I do, my dear. You cannot surely suspect me of being so deplorably ignorant of everything connected with people of fashion, as not to know that the most fatal thing that could be done for you all would be letting you trudge about on foot. I will not, however, deny, my dear boy, that there will be considerable difficulty in paying for it. Your father is right enough

there, poor man ; he knows only too well, I am sorry to say, the state of the account at the banker's. The fact is, you see, that people are altogether mistaken about Paris. I don't believe it is the least bit cheaper than London, when everything is taken into consideration ; for if society does not cost so much in one way, the immense difference as to the number of fine people one gets acquainted with brings up the expense in another. In short, I do not scruple to say that I was mistaken in my estimates of Paris expenses ; I am not the least ashamed to confess it. Every body is liable to such an error as that, though it is not every body who will own it as freely. However, we all know that experience bought is better than taught ; and if I have paid for my experience, you may be very sure that I shall take care to profit by it. We made a great mistake, Edward, in so often taking and paying, Heaven knows what ! for boxes at the opera. We did it no less than three times, and I have no doubt in the world, that if we had managed better, we might have got boxes lent to us. And then another absurd blunder was always having butcher's meat in the soup. I find that foreigners never think of such a thing,

and it makes a monstrous difference—odds and ends, you know, and vegetables and bread, and all that sort of thing. But I cannot blame myself for this, Edward, for nobody can learn, you know, before they are taught.

“Certainly not, ma’am; we all know that you are a most excellent manager,” replied her son; “but now if you please, ma’am,” he added, “I want you to tell me what I am to do at the rooms? Don’t you think that it will be more economical to subscribe for the whole season than for a month at a time? Here is the paper that the woman of the house gave me, which contains all particulars.”

Mrs. Roberts having examined the paper, and found that the rate of subscription was higher in proportion as the time subscribed for was short, energetically exclaimed, “Of course, my dear, where money runs rather scarce, as I confess that just now it does with us, we must contrive to get everything at the lowest price possible. We must not think of subscribing by the month, Edward, it is quite out of the question. The price by the season really seems to be wonderfully cheap, and that is the way we must take it. People who

really understand economy never overlook that sort of advantage. Besides, you may depend upon it, Edward, that the taking such lodgings as these, and setting ourselves down as subscribers for the whole season, will at once make us of importance to the whole society. People will be eager enough to get introduced to us."

"And about the carriage, ma'am? I suppose I may as well go at once and pick out a good carriage and horses, and a respectable-looking coachman? The livery stables are attached to the hotel where we dined yesterday. It is all one concern, so I shall be sure to go to the right place. I had better do it at once, I suppose; for of course you and the girls will choose to drive out this morning?"

"Why yes, my dear, I think you may as well do it all under one; only you must take care, Edward, that the carriage does not absolutely drive up to the door before I have spoken to your father on the subject. I do not at all anticipate any real difficulty about it; when I make up my mind to do a thing, I believe you all know that I generally do it well; but at the same time, Edward, I always make a point of shewing the most perfect

respect to your excellent father in all things, and I trust that my children will always follow my example."

"Of course we shall, ma'am, we always do," replied the young man. "But now, if you please, you must give me the money to pay the subscription to the rooms. I literally came away from Paris without a five-franc piece in the world."

"I have no doubt of it, my dear," said his mother, with a sympathetic sigh, "and I hope and trust we shall contrive to manage better here. By the bye, my dear Edward, I hope you won't mind having no more eggs for breakfast. It is by attention to all these little things, that real good managers contrive to do so much more than other people."

"Oh, no, ma'am, I don't care about the eggs at all," replied her son, counting the pieces she consigned to him for the subscription. "Besides," thought he, as he pocketed the money and left the room, "one can always get a breakfast at a coffee-house, if one is starved at home."

Having dismissed her darling son, who was, as she thankfully exclaimed to her heart, as useful as he was ornamental, Mrs. Roberts returned

to the room in which they had breakfasted, and in which she found Bertha Harrington alone. It instantly occurred to her that the half-witted young heiress would see nothing unreasonable in being asked to share the expenses of a carriage, and also of the family subscription, which was to open the rooms, and all their manifold delights, to the whole party for the season. Bertha was seated at one of the windows with an open volume in her hand; but she was not reading, her eyes being fixed on the pine-covered hill that at no great distance bounded the landscape.

“ I am quite glad I have found you here by yourself, my dear Bertha, for I want to speak to you about a little business. I think your dear good aunt, Lady Morton, told me before we left Paris, that she had given you fifty pounds, my dear, being half-a-year’s allowance of pocket-money ? ”

It has been stated that the eyes of Bertha Harrington were very large eyes, and, moreover, both in shape and colour, they were very beautiful eyes ; but as to their expression, it would be imprudent to speak with equal certainty, because scarcely any two people agreed about it. Some

thought, of whom her poor mother was one, that no eyes ever possessed the power of expressing tenderness and affection so touchingly. Others, of whom again her mother was one, and her *ci-devant* governess another, were of opinion that there was at times a more striking expression of deep thought, and strong intellectual power, in her eyes, than in any others they had ever looked into. While again others declared, and of these Mrs. Roberts was one, that when Bertha Harrington opened her great large eyes wide, and stared full in one's face, she looked most completely like a fool. If Mrs. Roberts had never thought this before, she would most certainly have thought so now, for assuredly there was a sort of vacancy in the stare with which Miss Harrington received this allusion to her private affairs, that might have appeared to many like the unmeaning glance of utter stupidity. But Mrs. Roberts saw nothing in it to surprise her; she had been for some time convinced that Bertha Harrington was very nearly an idiot, and with her usual amiable consideration, she determined to treat her accordingly.

“Don't look so frightened, my dear child,”

said she, with a smile that was really quite involuntary, "nobody is going to scold you about your pocket-money. All I want, my dear Bertha, is, that you should try to understand what I am going to say to you, and then I am sure you will answer me as you ought to do. The truth is, Bertha, that our long journey from Paris has been dreadfully expensive—gentlemen are always so extravagant upon a journey. And now, of course, a variety of new expenses come upon us, which must be met—unless indeed I were cruel enough to keep you, and the other poor dear girls, out of every thing gay and pleasant; and that I certainly will not do. Now you heard what Mr. Roberts said just now about the carriage, didn't you?"

"No, ma'am," replied Bertha.

Mrs. Roberts shook her head, but went on, raising her voice a little. "Whether you heard him or not, my dear, what he said was, that he feared the expense of a carriage was more than he could stand just now, and yet, I am sure, that without it, you can none of you go anywhere; and that is the reason, my dear, why I wanted to ask you, whether you did not think that out of

your very large allowance for pocket-money, you could contrive to pay something towards a carriage. Don't you think you could, my dear?"

Bertha paused for half a moment before she answered, and then said, "No, ma'am."

There was a decision in the succinct directness of this reply, which a little startled Mrs. Roberts; but she thought that the peculiarly composed air with which it was uttered had something so stultified in it, that she was more than ever confirmed in her belief of the young lady's mental deficiency; so giving her a good-humoured, condescending little pat upon the shoulder, she said,

"Come, come, my dear child, I must not have you talk nonsense. We know very well that you have more money than you know what to do with. So you must be a good girl, Bertha, and let me have fifteen pounds—or twenty would be better still—towards paying for a carriage. And when you have done this, I promise that you shall never be without one to ride in, any single day, as long as you stay."

"If you will be so good as to write to my aunt Morton, ma'am," said Bertha, rather demurely, "and explain your wishes to her, she will in

return explain to you, I think, that the four hundred a year which you are to receive, if I continue in your family, is intended to include the accommodation of a carriage."

"Do you think so, my dear?" returned Mrs. Roberts, colouring violently, and at once aware, with (as she told herself) all her usual quickness, that Bertha Harrington, like many other half-witted persons, was cunning enough about money. "Well, well, my dear," she added, without the least apparent diminution of her good-humour, "we won't say any more about it, then. I must try what I can do to persuade Mr. Roberts."

And to say truth, this unexpected display of "cunning" in the young heiress, sent the managing lady off to her husband, very nearly as well pleased as if she had carried the money she had asked for in her hand.

"We must take care what we are about, Mr. Roberts," said she, as she luckily caught him in the act of taking up his hat and stick. "Miss Bertha Harrington, in consequence of what you said at breakfast I suppose, has just given me to understand that she wishes me to write to her aunt, Lady Morton, in order to inquire whether

the accommodation of a carriage—those were her very words—whether the accommodation of a carriage was not understood to be included in the four hundred a-year which we are to receive, *if she stays with us.*”

Mr. Roberts produced a long but very gentle whistle.

“Not a word more upon the subject, my dear,” said he; “see about getting a comfortable carriage directly. Let it be the very first thing—do you understand?—the very first thing attended to.”

“Yes, my dear, I will,” replied Mrs. Roberts, with a sigh, “it is plain that there is no help for it!”

CHAPTER III.

LUCKILY for the Roberts family, all the carriages in Baden-Baden were not yet engaged; so they were not obliged to incur the additional expense of sending either to Carlsruhe or Strasbourg to seek one, which, from the excited state in which the family feeling then was, respecting *real* good management and *true* economy, they certainly would have done, rather than commit the imprudence of presenting themselves before the idlers of the baths without one. But Edward had the great good fortune of finding an equipage in every way suited to his wishes, having various traces, on the somewhat queerly shaped pannels, that it had

once been varnished, and being, moreover, lined with bright scarlet moreen, which the young man felt to be both dashing to the eyes that looked at it from without, and becoming to all the complexions that were seen within.

He really justified all his mother's hopes of him, by the spirited manner in which he issued his orders concerning the style in which the vehicle was to be prepared for his use. He spoke French, as a distinguished statesman once said of himself, with great audacity; and as he had the usual facility of youth, and a tolerably quick ear to assist him, he rarely met with a native Frenchman, of whom, luckily, there were many at Baden, to whom he could not make himself intelligible. When he encountered a German, indeed, he often found that the national slowness of his constitution caused him to stumble at obstacles, over which the briskness of a Frenchman would have enabled him to scramble without much difficulty. But, fortunately, the keeper of the livery-stables was a Frenchman, so that he understood the young gentleman tolerably well on the whole, though here and there he was a little puzzled.

“*Sacre—!*” began the youth. “How these

polissons confondus of yours neglect the harness ! I say, *vous scélérat*," turning to one of the helpers in the yard, " mind *vos coups*, for I'll *vous fouetter jusqu'à un pouce de votre vie*, if you send harness to me that has not been properly rubbed."

Fortunately, again, the helper was a German, and having answered "*ja wohl*" with great civility, he turned to his master, as the young gentleman strutted out of the yard, to inquire what the words meant, for he did not know exactly what he was wanted to do.

" The words mean, that he is an ENGLISHMAN," replied the master of the establishment. " And one might often think they were hired by *la grande nation* to travel the world over, on purpose to make the name detested. And if it be so, they do not take their wages for nothing."

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By the time the carriage drove to the door of the Balcony House, the wardrobes of the Roberts family had been sufficiently unpacked for them to be ready to enter it without one shadow of doubt or misgiving respecting their good looks and general appearance.

" Here it comes !" cried Edward, who had for

some time been stationed at the window, in his most *recherché* morning costume, awaiting its approach. "Here it comes, and if you are not all pleased with it, you may get the next yourselves, that's all."

These words caused Mrs. Roberts and her two highly-finished daughters to rush to the window from the looking-glass which ornamented the chimney-piece, where they had all three been standing on tiptoe for the last five minutes, to take a final review of what they had been doing for the last hour or two.

"Oh! it is exactly the sort of carriage I wished for!" exclaimed Maria, colouring with delight; "so perfectly open, and so particularly calculated to show everybody in it to the greatest possible advantage, on account of the lining, you know, mamma, which is so capital for the complexion. You are a darling, Edward, and that's the truth."

"Nothing, indeed, *could* have been more completely what I wished for, my dear son," said Mrs. Roberts, turning her eyes from the carriage to his face, with infinite complacency. "But I confess I should have thought it rather strange if

my own dear Edward had shown himself incapable of choosing a proper equipage for his mother and sisters. He is too much a part of myself for me to feel any such fear. But I thank you, my dear Edward, for having shown yourself so attentive and thoughtful about every particular. The colour of the lining was really very important, on account of your sisters, and you have hit the thing exactly. What do *you* say to it, Agatha?"

"I approve it perfectly, ma'am," replied her eldest daughter, "but I beg to observe that the effect will be infinitely improved by my old blue shawl, the colour of which is so beautiful, and as fresh as ever it was; this shawl must be thrown carelessly over the back of the carriage. And if your cloak also, ma'am, which is really so rich-looking as to give an air of dignity and consequence, were hung gracefully at your back, I certainly do think that, dressed as we all are, with Edward driving us, and that decent-looking coachman put in the dickey behind by way of a footman, we may set out without feeling the least objection to meeting again the same party we did yesterday."

“ *I think so,*” returned her mother in a tone that left no doubt of her sincerity. “ But Agatha,” she added, after meditating for a moment, “ don’t you think my beautiful cloak may be rather the worse for this display ? Remember what it cost, my dear ! I wish I could teach you a little of my economy, Agatha !”

“ Nobody, ma’am, can justly reproach me with not being economical. Maria knows what sort of stockings I wear under my boots ; and there are many other things I could mention which might convince the most suspicious person of my being really and truly economical. But it is perfectly nonsense, ma’am, to talk of hurting velvet. Every body that understands any thing about the matter, is well aware that *nothing* can hurt velvet, and that is exactly the reason why people give such a monstrous price for it. It is exactly *that* which makes it so economical.”

“ There is truth in that, certainly, my dear,” replied her mother. “ Run, Maria, will you ? there’s a dear girl, and open the bottom drawer in my room, and there you will find it wrapped up in an old table-cloth. It will give exactly the sort of air which a person like me, a little

stout, you know, and the mother of a family, ought to have. You are a clever creature, Agatha, and nobody can doubt it."

"But upon my soul *I* shall doubt it," cried the lively Edward, who had been practising a few coachman's vagaries before the glass; "I shall doubt it doubtably, if she keeps us any longer with her preaching. Run, and get your blue rag, girl, at once—I know it's rather a good notion, but I'll be shot if I wait for it."

And having uttered these words, he darted out of the room, and installed himself on the coach-box, where, having coaxed the legitimate Jehu to repose himself on the seat behind, he solaced himself for the further delay of the ladies, by arranging the reins on his white-gloved fingers in the most approved style, and by attempting with infinite grace to remove a fly from the patient ear of one of the horses.

Meanwhile the ladies hastened to join him as soon as their decorative drapery had been obtained, and Miss Harrington summoned from the snug little apartment which had been assigned her. Had Bertha been quite aware of the resolute projects for display, which at this moment swelled

the bosoms of Mrs. Roberts and her offspring, she might have shrunk from making a part of their *cortège*. But no such thought entered her head. She knew well enough, poor girl, that she should find them very wearisome companions, and it was decidedly a part of her proposed scheme of enjoyment at Baden, to get as much out of their way as possible; but she thought that by accompanying them in a drive or two, she should learn enough of the geography of the place to enable her to ramble about alone, without being puzzled as to the getting home again. She therefore joined the party the moment she was called upon to do so, and they set off in full glory for the library, that being the spot which the judicious Edward preferred to all others to begin with, as a sort of focus at which all the brightest emanations of rank, fashion, and beauty were sure to meet.

“But shall we not be likely to find papa there?” whispered Maria to her brother, upon his declaring their destination, and rising up from her seat in order to ask the question discreetly.

“He won’t get up if we do,” replied the young man; “he told me so this morning.”

“That is a comfort, to be sure,” replied Maria;

“but of course he will come and speak to us—and you know how he looks, Edward! Shall you like it? to be mixed up with such a very old-fashioned figure, at the very moment of first showing ourselves! Will it not be running into danger?”

“It is no good to talk about it, Maria,” he replied, with an impatient action of both reins and whip. “You may depend upon it that there are many fashionable young people, besides ourselves, who have quizzical governors. It is one of the things one must bear, you know, like the toothache, or anything else that can’t be helped. It’s no good to grumble. Sit down, will you. Here are the same two fellows that we saw yesterday.”

Mr. Edward was right. The same “two fellows” who had at once so terrified and enchanted the Roberts family on the preceding day, as they made their dusty entry to the town of Baden, were now seen approaching them on horseback, under the shade of the trees among which the drive to the rooms, the theatre, the library, and all the other gay things of Baden passed. Edward had just turned his horses into this road as he

perceived them; and between his anxiety to examine them and their horses, and the still greater anxiety to show off to advantage himself and his own, he pulled his reins to the left when he ought to have pulled them to the right, which not only gave him the appearance of intending to make a sort of chariot charge against the two horsemen, but produced the still more dangerous result of running his wheels within half-an-inch of a tolerably deep, open water-course, neatly fabricated by the road-side, for the purpose of carrying off the sudden torrents which are so apt, in all mountainous regions, to be rude, unless proper attention be paid to them. The two gentlemen who had thus innocently endangered the safety of our travellers, rode abreast; but fortunately their attention was not directed to the same object, the eyes of one being settled very fixedly upon the face of Miss Harrington, while those of his companion were engaged in watching the perilous progress of the wheels. Both gentlemen were well-looking, and of fashionable and rather distinguished appearance; and it struck Edward Roberts that he had heard one of them addressed as "my lord," when he had been making some

inquiries at the library. This recollection sufficed to overcome every thought of coachmanlike precaution in his mind, and a very serious accident would have unquestionably followed, had not the young man, whose eye was upon the wheels, and who was not the noble individual that had absorbed the soul of our incautious young friend, suddenly sprung from his steed, and turned the heads of the misguided carriage-horses, suffering his own to trot off in whatever direction he preferred.

Bertha Harrington was the only person in the carriage who was at all aware of the importance of the service thus rendered, for she only had perceived how dangerously their carriage had swerved; while the young nobleman, first learning the peril from the expression of the face upon which he had been gazing, and then from the marks left by the suddenly turned wheels, rode round the carriage to the corner in which Miss Harrington was seated, and taking off his hat, expressed his hope that the ladies had not been alarmed.

“Alarmed!” screamed Mrs. Roberts, with all the strength of her lungs—“what is it, gentle-

men? What, in the name of Heaven, has happened to us?"

The displaced coachman had by this time descended from his seat on the dickey, and stood at the horses' heads, uttering a few execrations in high Dutch, on the presumptuous ignorance of young English gentlemen on their travels; while the young man who had done the party the good service of saving them from being overturned into the ditch, perceiving that his assistance was no longer wanted, stepped to the side of the carriage at which Mrs. Roberts's was screaming forth her unanswered questions; for the young nobleman who had addressed his polite inquiries as to the general state of the ladies' nerves to Miss Harrington, very pertinaciously awaited his answer from her, leaving the important lady who sat beside her utterly unnoticed. Very timely, therefore, was the approach of the elder of the two gentlemen to the other side of the vehicle, and very good-natured was the tone in which he informed the greatly excited Mrs. Roberts, that there was no further cause for alarm.

"But what *was* it then, sir?" she resumed, in a more tranquil voice. "I am sure you are a

most obliging person, and if there really is nothing the matter, we shall one and all be quite pleased with the accident that has led us to make your acquaintance. But what *was* the accident, sir ? ”

“ Your horses swerved, ma’am,” he replied, “ and as there is a very awkward water-course on that side of the road, I thought there was no time to be lost in giving them a twist the other way.”

Having said this, he made his bow, and retreated ; and perceiving that his horse had taken leave to depart, he determined upon following him to his livery-stables, where there was little doubt that he would find him.

“ I must look after my horse, Lynberry,” said he, as he walked off towards the town ; “ you had better ride to the stables and meet me.”

But the young Lord Lynberry thought he had better not ride in any direction which would take him out of sight of those wondrous eyes which had first become visible to him from the dusty vehicle that had borne the eclipsed family of Robertses to the baths, and which now again seemed to him, as they had done then, ten thou-

sand times more enchanting than all the other eyes in the world put together.

Meanwhile the feelings of the Robertses were of a very mixed description. Poor Edward had become quite certain about the lord's being a lord, and knew not whether to be most provoked at having been seen in such a disgracefully un-coachmanlike scrape, or delighted at having the young nobleman brought into parley with his family. On the whole, perhaps, the latter feeling predominated. For in the first place it was not the young lord who had first perceived his blunder, and then officiously interfered to set it to rights, and therefore it was folly to be angry with him; so that at last he came to the conclusion that he would repay all the civility that had been shown them by a return of particularly polite civility on his own part to the young lord; while his angry feelings might find vent in giving a different sort of reception to the advances of the actual offender, who he was pretty sure was no lord at all; first, because he had jumped off his horse so exactly like a common groom; and next, because the real lord had not answered him a single word when he told him to meet him at the stables.

As to the two Miss Robertses, they were altogether in such a state of agitation, that it would have been very difficult for them to say themselves, whether they were most teased or pleased by what had happened. Pleased they were, greatly beyond their powers of language to express, by the blessed chance which had brought Lord Lynberry to take off his hat beside their carriage—but teased, alas! they were also, to a degree that none but a Miss Roberts could be, at the utter neglect into which their own charms had fallen, while his ill-judging, though noble eyes, had been fixed with such inconceivable pertinacity on the whitewashed face of that idiot Bertha! Mrs. Roberts, indeed, with her usual superiority to the rest of her family, felt no doubt whatever about the matter. She knew that Lynberry must be Lord Lynberry, and was enchanted by the adventure; she neither saw nor felt that its obvious advantages had any drawback; and when Lord Lynberry, after uttering to Bertha all that it was well possible to say on the occasion, at length turned to her, and added, that he hoped he might be permitted to inquire to-morrow how they all were after their alarming accident, she,

for the first time, felt her conscience perfectly at rest on the subject of the lodgings.

“What should I have suffered *now*,” thought she, “if I had taken a horrid, little, cheap lodging! I should have been ready to sink into the earth!” And when, with her very best smile, she replied to his lordship’s civil speech, by saying, “Most happy! the Balcony House, my lord,” the whole family felt a thrill of delight which overpowered every less agreeable sensation.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE the happy family pursued their way to the library, and occupied themselves there for a long half hour, in saying and doing every thing which they thought most likely to attract the admiring attention of the various loungers who went in and out, the young Lord Lynberry complied with the request of his tutor, (for such was the office held by his companion,) Mr. Vincent, and riding to the livery-stables, found him remounted upon his runaway steed, and awaiting his arrival. The two young men then rode, as they had before intended, towards La Favorite, one of the Grand

Duke's pretty residences, and their chat as they went naturally fell upon their late adventure.

"That's the prettiest girl I have seen at Baden, Vincent," said his lordship.

"Which girl, my lord? I thought they were all pretty," was the reply.

"You soulless monster!" exclaimed the young nobleman. "How is it possible you can class the angelic creature who has left an impression on my soul which nothing on this side heaven can ever efface—how is it possible you can class her with the sleek-looking, long-eared animals who were near her? Vincent, you are my tutor, but you must forgive the liberty I take—I despise you."

"If you will forgive my despicable qualities, I will forgive your superiority," replied Mr. Vincent; "so you really need not put the least restraint upon your feelings, though I am your tutor. But why do you say that the pretty creatures who were stationed near your divinity had long ears? This is slander, my lord, and I hold myself bound to reprehend you for it. I am quite sure that your lordship never saw even the tip of their ears, and I therefore consider this wanton attack upon the proportions of that un-

known member, as equally ungenerous and unjust."

"How absolute the knave is! Do not the whole race of pretty young ladies look, every mother's daughter of them, like pretty puppy-dogs, with their long silken hair hanging down on each side of their soft eyes and unmeaning noses, precisely like the ornamental ears of those valued animals? What *I* call a beautiful girl is one who, on the very instant you first look at her, leaves you without power to decide whether she has ringlets or no ringlets, whether her eyes be black, blue, or brown—whether her nose be Greek, Roman, or Egyptian; or, in short, of any thing concerning her, save that she is lovely. Such a one is this transcendent creature. *What* she is, to my cost, alas! I know only too well;—*who* she is, I must learn before to-night's ball; but I fear, I fear—" And his lordship sighed profoundly.

"What, my gracious lord?"

"That my Lord Southtown will not approve my choice," replied the young nobleman, with a second deep sigh.

"Is it come to that already?" returned the

tutor, laughing. "Nay, then, the fair creature has made quick work, indeed. But why should you feel so suddenly assured of paternal opposition? Your father is exceedingly indulgent."

"Out on thee, thou blind guide! You did not see her then, I presume, entering the town last night, packed up amidst bales and boxes, in a dusty veterino carriage, and looking like a diamond set in coal?"

"No, my dear Lynberry, I certainly did not."

Lord Lynberry turned half round in his saddle, with his right hand firmly resting on the back of his steed, and in this attitude took a deliberate survey of the person of his youthful tutor.

"William Harrington Vincent," said he, at length, "considering that you really are a very well-looking fellow, and, as I take it, not yet quite thirty years old, I consider you as an object little less worthy of curiosity than the Siamese Twins, or General Tom Thumb, or any other celebrated caprice of nature. How, in the name of Heaven, did you contrive, last night, to pass within an ell of that angelic being, and remain unconscious of the fact? I cannot understand you—I cannot, upon my soul."

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After evincing considerable patience, and perhaps still more good nature, Mr. Vincent did at length get tired, very tired, of his companion's rhapsodies; and having listened in silence to a very prolix exposition of his firm determination never to marry any other woman than the young lady in black, who had so nearly been thrown into the ditch, he replied by saying,

“Do you know, Lynberry, I think this is a very dull road; what say you to a gallop back to the library, in order to examine the names of all the new arrivals? Who knows but we may find that of the future Countess of Southtown among them?”

The only reply to this was the sudden wheeling round of the young nobleman's horse, a movement immediately imitated by his companion, and then they both set off, *ventre à terre*, on their return to Baden.

The bright suggestion of Mr. Vincent led to the wished-for result; the very last names inscribed among the subscribers to the library were those of Mr. Fitzherbert Roberts and family, and Miss Harrington, BALCONY HOUSE.

Had his lordship forgotten the words, Balcony

House, so proudly spoken by Mrs. Roberts? No. They lay treasured amongst all that he considered as most valuable in the safest cell of his memory.

“These are the people, Vincent,” he exclaimed, laying his finger on the words Balcony House. “That is where the fat woman told me to call on them, and, by Heaven, my adorable is your namesake. How do we know that she may not be a cousin? *Your* name was Harrington before your father changed it for the estate that he has so magnanimously run through. How do we know that she is not your cousin, Vincent? Tell me, you well-born tutor you, tell me why she should not be your cousin? Not all the blood of all the Howards could make her in my eyes more noble than I think her already. But it might make matters easier, you know, with my father. Tell me, why should she not be your cousin?”

“I do not say she is not my cousin, Lynberry,” replied the tutor, endeavouring to look grave; “only I never happened to hear of such a cousin, as far as I can remember.”

“Remember? you remember nothing, Vincent, except a parcel of hateful old book-learning, that had better be forgotten. I have not the slightest

doubt in the world that she is your cousin, and I shall take it very ill if you do not introduce yourself to her as a relation. Harrington is such a very uncommon name, that it is exceedingly improbable you should not be related."

"I will make whatever inquiries you please, my dear friend," replied Vincent; "only it is but right to inform you that if your conjecture prove true, my claiming acquaintance with her in consequence must be quite out of the question. I know of no female cousin but one, who is the daughter of a cousin-german of my father's, which cousin-german of my father's is a very worthless middle-aged personage, who long ago quarrelled with my father, *à l'outrance*, and either of them would consider any intercourse with the family of the other a sin and a shame of the blackest dye. However, I suspect that no such obstacle exists to my making the acquaintance of the young lady, for if I mistake not, the only child of our hostile cousin is still quite a little girl."

"At any rate, Vincent, there is some comfort to be found in the name of the people she is with. Fitzherbert is no obscure name, you must allow that."

This same unobscure name of FITZHERBERT had meanwhile produced, at the very least, as much satisfaction to the happy family on whom it had been so unexpectedly bestowed, as it could possibly do to the enamoured young viscount. The honour was first made known to them by the following address, firmly and distinctly written on a parcel containing some trifling purchases, made by the young ladies in the universal magazine annexed to the circulating library.

*Mrs. Fitzherbert Roberts,
Balcony House,
Baden-Baden.*

As the handwriting was that of Edward, his mother and sisters naturally applied to him for the solution of this pleasant-looking mystery; and none but a proud and devoted mother can possibly conceive the delightful feelings which swelled the bosom of Mrs. Roberts, as she received the following answer:—

“Why you did not suppose, did you, that I intended to go on everlastingly to the end of time with the name of Roberts, with nothing in nature to help it, except just what I could do myself in the way of setting it off? I know very well that I, and the girls, between us, with a little of your

help, mother, *may* in time do a good deal towards making it talked of. But leave me alone for giving matters a bit of a shove, when I am in a hurry. I am up to a thing or two, ma'am, or I am greatly mistaken."

"Was there ever any thing like him!" exclaimed Mrs. Roberts, tears of maternal pride actually filling her eyes as she spoke. "I don't believe there is such another from one end of Europe to the other! Doesn't it look well, and sound well, girls? The Fitzherbert Robertses! What could have put it into your dear clever head, Edward?"

"Why, hearing of the Montgomery Thompsons at Paris. It struck me at once that our name would sound just as well as theirs with this bit of a flourish to it. But you do not know all yet, mother. I could not set about it in Paris, you know, for there we had sung out Roberts and Roberts till it was impossible to change the tune; but no sooner did I know for certain that we were going to make a regular flitting into altogether another quarter of the globe, than I went to a little engraver's shop somewhere up in the Marais, quite out of the way, and got these cards printed. Look! are they not capital?"

"Capital! they are perfectly divine!" exclaimed

Maria, seizing upon one of them, and pressing it in rapture to her lips. "Without any exception, Edward, it is the very cleverest thing I ever saw done in my life."

Agatha, who had been listening to this explanation with very earnest attention, now took one of the cards in her hand, and read aloud,

MR. FITZHERBERT ROBERTS.

MRS. FITZHERBERT ROBERTS.

THE MISSES FITZHERBERT ROBERTS.

"Yes, Edward," said she, "the thought certainly does you great credit—very great credit. In so young a man I do think it shows great talent—great knowledge of the world, which, after all, is the only sort of knowledge of any real use to human beings. People who live in the world must study the world, or they will fare very badly, you may depend upon it."

"I wish your father could hear you, Agatha," said Mrs. Roberts; "he has a great respect for your understanding, and if he could hear you express your opinion on this matter in the admirable way you have now done, I think it might be very useful, for I feel a good deal afraid of what he will say about it."

"How can you, even in joke, mamma, pretend

to say that you are afraid of my father?" replied Agatha, with rather a contemptuous sneer. "I should certainly think you exceedingly silly if you were. But for a woman of sense, as you are, who contrives to have every thing so completely her own way, it is worse than silly to talk so."

"By real talent, and constant good management, Agatha," replied Mrs. Roberts, "I certainly do contrive, for the sake of my family, to have things a good deal my own way; and Heaven have mercy upon you, children, if this ever changes, for I know not what would become of you! You would turn back again from butterflies into grubs, in double quick time, I promise you. But though I *do* have my own way, Miss Agatha, in some things, there are others in which I cannot at all feel certain of it; or, at any rate, not without having a monstrous deal of trouble; and this clever thought of Edward's about the name, is just a case in point."

"Leave the governor to me, ma'am," said the young man, undauntedly. "I will undertake, somehow or other, to prevent his giving you any trouble about it. How does he know but that I may have discovered, in some of my hard reading and deep study in old books and records, that we

are a branch of Robertses who had years and years ago a right to the name of Fitzherbert ? or I might tell him, you know, that having left one or two trumpery little debts at Paris, which I shall pay when I marry Bertha, it will be quite as well to create a little puzzle about our identity. Somehow or other, never mind how, I will bring him to reason, you may depend upon it."

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There are some facts too obvious for an historian to mention ; such, for instance, as the absence of Miss Harrington during the foregoing conversation, she being at that time taking her first solitary ramble ; as likewise the determination of going to the *soirée dansante* to which the Fitzherbert Robertses had all arrived within half a second of learning that such an assembly was to take place. Such things are too self-evident to need pointing out ; and therefore without being guilty of any important omission, our travellers may be at once displayed in the enjoyment of a crowded ball at Baden. When their intention of going there had been first mentioned to Bertha, she had said that she should prefer staying at home ; but when Mrs. Roberts, taking her apart,

besought her as a very great favour to go, urging moreover the certainty of her making herself more remarkable than was quite right, by withdrawing herself from the habits and manners of the family with whom her aunt had thought proper to place her, she yielded, and entered the crowded ball-room with them accordingly. No young ladies had ever more quickly obtained an insight into the miniature mysteries of fashion than the Miss Robertses. To go early to a party was one of the many acts which they energetically stigmatized, as among the most atrociously vulgar sins that could be committed; and, therefore, despite the longing and the tedium which they all endured while waiting for the "*fashionable time*," they never transgressed the regulation, nor did they now permit themselves to enter upon the festive scene till it was crowded with all the "beauty and fashion" at the baths. That ball-room at Baden-Baden, with its decorative shrubs and flowers, and its varied specimens of pretty women from all quarters of the civilized world, is a brilliant spectacle; and to Bertha it was moreover something so perfectly new, that she involuntarily stood still within three steps of the thresh-

old, that she might look about her. The Roberts family were greatly shocked.

“For Heaven’s sake, Bertha!” exclaimed Agatha, “do not look so horribly new! People will think that you never were in a ball-room before in your life.”

“I never was,” replied Bertha, blushing very beautifully, and hastening onward. But before they had advanced three paces farther, the elegant *nonchalance* of the Miss Robertses was severely tried by perceiving Lord Lynberry in the centre of one of the most striking groups in the room, apparently regaling them by the relation of some comical anecdote, for the whole party were listening to him with the air of being much amused. As they passed this party, Miss Agatha Roberts happened to drop her fan; and the little bustle which ensued before she could recover it from under the feet of one of Lord Lynberry’s party, caused his lordship to turn round. Few triumphs have ever been more keenly enjoyed than that which, for a moment at least, flashed from the eyes of Mrs. and the Miss Robertses, upon seeing the gay young nobleman suddenly quit the party who were so attentively listening to him, and approach to pay his compliments to them. A

complacent simper upon the fat face of a plump, well-pleased, hope-inspired mother, is too common a sight under such circumstances, to attract any attention at all; and, fortunately for the high pretensions of the Roberts race, its pretty daughters had learned, amongst other *minauderies*, to receive the salutations of all the gentlemen whom they particularly wished to attract, with no demonstrations of delight more obvious to the ordinary looker-on than a little nod of the head; for as to latent smiles, bouquet-sheltered blushes, and any of the thousand-and-one varieties of eye-beams which may lie in ambush under this cold *abord*, nobody whatever but the parties principally concerned can possibly know any thing about it. So the Miss Robertses stood the approach of Lord Lynberry admirably; and when he twisted himself in and out as he made civil speeches to the whole party, till he had reached the side of Bertha, and was then heard, by ears too much on the alert to lose any thing, to ask for the honour of her hand in the next dance, nothing like emotion of any kind was discernible beyond what might be expressed by the simultaneous and somewhat ardent sniff which they each gave to their bouquets.

But Lord Lynberry understood the business of the ball-room quite as well as the Miss Robertses, and by no means intended that the newly elected idol of his affections should be exposed to any of the disagreeable adventures which are apt to arise from close companionship with disappointed beauties; and he therefore, with a quiet celerity that did infinite honour to his *savoir vivre*, murmured in the ear of Bertha, "Excuse me for a moment," then plunged into the crowd, and speedily emerged from it again, leading captive the young Irish nobleman, whose sonorous name of Lord Clanballygough had already reached the ears of the Roberts family, and also a small and rather premature baronet, called Sir Simpson Sanders. These two highly eligible partners were, as quick as thought, engaged to dance with the two Miss Robertses, which may suffice to explain the words whispered by Agatha to her mother, when she placed her fan and her embroidered pocket-handkerchief in the maternal hand, "A tolerably successful *débüt*. Both titles!"

CHAPTER V.

THIS first ball at the Baden rooms proved almost as important to some of the parties present as the most ardent-minded among them could have anticipated; for impressions were made, and what was more important still, purposes were decided on, which really did "*influence the future destiny*" of more than one of the persons present at it. This last result, at least, is found to ensue upon such occasions less frequently than is predicated by the majority of youthful males and females, while arming themselves for the gay arena

in which eyes are to do battle with eyes, and hearts are to be lost and won.

In the first place, the young Lord Lynberry left the brilliant scene altogether a different man from what he was when he approached it; for then he had only felt, as he had often done before, that he was about to meet the very loveliest creature that ever existed—one for whose dear sake he had already spent hours in scrawling upon every scrap of paper that came in his way, “Bertha, Viscountess Lynberry,” and sometimes, “Bertha, Countess Southtown;” but ere he quitted it, his feelings had undergone a most surprising revolution. And Bertha, too, had changed her mind about many matters. But of this anon. Some details of this important evening’s adventures must perforce be given, in order to make the subsequent pages intelligible; but it shall be done with all possible brevity, for nothing is more beguiling to the compilers of such chronicles as the present, than the having to relate the petty adventures of an important ball; page after page runs from under the too faithful pen, till a whole chapter is found all too short to contain them.

The dance over, for which the young ladies of

our travelling party were so happily provided with partners in the last chapter, the following changes took place before the next began. Lord Lynberry, though still stedfastly determined that Bertha Harrington should be converted into Lady Lynberry as soon as he could possibly arrange the necessary preliminaries, was nevertheless rather disagreeably awakened to the conviction, that as yet she was not so distractedly in love with him as it was natural to expect she should be. The reason for this however was, he thought, obvious. He found that as yet they had no subjects of conversation equally interesting to both. This of course would be remedied as soon as he should begin to speak to her openly of the unchangeable passion she had inspired, and of the delightful plans for future happiness which were opened before them both in consequence. But at present he was quite conscious that nothing which he had been able to think of in the way of amusing conversation, had been in the least degree successful. It was so evident, from the very first moment that they stood up together, that she was extremely embarrassed as to where she was to take her place, when she ought to begin, and so forth,

that he began to suspect, what the first volunteer speech she addressed to him avowed, namely, that this was the first ball at which she had appeared; and this enabled him to account for her cold manner and persevering silence, without very deeply wounding his vanity; so he gently pressed her hand, as he placed her beside her bulky *chaperon*, and threw a vast deal of tenderness into his eyes, as he expressed his hope that this was not the last dance they were to enjoy together that evening. In reply to this speech, look, and action, Miss Harrington for the first time raised her beautiful eyes to his, and for the space of about half a moment she really seemed occupied in endeavouring to discover what he meant; but he moved on, sighing as he went, because he had not found her youthful intellect in as great a state of perfection as her youthful beauty; but determined to cultivate as much general intimacy with her party as he could, in order to facilitate his scheme for performing the Promethean process, and awakening her to life. With this view he immediately asked the first Miss Roberts within his reach, to favour him with her hand for the next dance. This fortunate first found was Miss Maria; and to describe

her sensations on the occasion must be needless. The equally happy Agatha was almost at the same propitious moment introduced by her first partner to a second ; and although this second partner was not blessed with a title, his peculiarly handsome person, his fashionable air, and the bewitching name of Montgomery, fully atoned for the deficiency.

Bertha meanwhile, though really half concealed by some of the eighteen breadths of majestic silk which spread themselves on either side of Mrs. Roberts, was not so totally overlooked but that she too got a partner. The ceremonies of introduction at the Brunnen are often as slight as their other bubbles ; so that even those who under other circumstances might not be classed among the Captain Easys of the age, make no great scruple of seizing upon somewhat slight accidents for commencing a wished-for acquaintance. Mr. Vincent, the young tutor of Lord Lynberry, either to please himself or his pupil, availed himself upon the present occasion of the accident of the preceding day, as an excuse for addressing Mrs. Roberts and the young lady by her side ; and after hoping that they had experienced no ill effects from

their alarm, he ventured to ask Bertha to dance with him.

Although the statement which he had made to his pupil respecting his reasons for not believing that Miss Harrington was his cousin was perfectly correct, the idea that it was just possible she might be so, had afterwards suggested itself: he remembered that little girls do grow very suddenly into young women, and he remembered also that if that pretty creature were really the daughter of his father's hostile cousin, she would be no more likely to feel wrathfully disposed towards him than he did towards her; and having thus argued himself into courage for the enterprise, he led her out to dance, determined to ascertain, before he led her back again, whether she were in truth related to him or not.

That woman is a capricious animal, has been too often asserted, and received as true, for any prudent person to venture upon denial of so generally recognised a statement; and perhaps it was only because the statement is true, that Bertha, though so "earthly dull" and obstinately stupid a partner while dancing with Lord Lynberry, appeared, as completely as a quiet-mannered girl could do, the

reverse, while dancing with his tutor. She was never a very loquacious person, but now she was by no means a silent one, and, between every *tour de valse*, rather a longer time than ordinary was lost from the exercise, by the inclination which both her partner and herself testified for conversation.

When the music ceased, Mr. Vincent, as he offered his arm, suggested that Mrs. Roberts was seated in a part of the room where there was too much draught to make a place near her safe immediately after dancing.

“Let me recommend you to sit down here, at least for a few minutes,” he added; “Miss Roberts and Mr. Montgomery have had the prudence to select this side of the room, I perceive.”

Bertha made no objection to the proposal, nor would she have done so had he assigned no reason whatever for selecting this place in preference to the one occupied by Mrs. Roberts. Her entire ignorance of all the minor etiquettes of society prevented her from feeling it in any degree desirable that she should approach any one whom, in her innocent heart, she particularly wished to avoid; and she seated herself in the snug corner

pointed out by her agreeable partner, with such an innocent air of satisfaction and approval, that perhaps there was not another man in the room, besides that partner, who would not have felt disposed to smile as he watched it. Mr. Vincent, on the contrary, began to look more than usually grave as he placed himself beside her ; but the thoughtful expression of countenance, which now succeeded to the gayer aspect which he had before worn, was not produced either by his approval or disapproval of her manner towards him, but by the fact that he really had something serious to say to her.

“I am half afraid, Miss Harrington,” he began, “to say to you what, nevertheless, I am quite determined that I will say, *coute qui coute* ; which is being more bold than gallant, for I confess I think it very likely that what I am about to utter may prevent my ever having the pleasure of dancing with you again.”

“Indeed !” replied Bertha, with a smile, which had some sort of meaning in it which he could not understand. He looked at her earnestly for a moment, and then replied, “Yes, *indeed*.”

“Well then, begin, Mr. William Harrington

Vincent," returned Bertha, "your communication must, I suppose, be something very terrible, but I will bear it as well as I can."

"Will you, Bertha Elizabeth Harrington?" he said in reply, while a smile of every evident satisfaction lit up his handsome features. "Is it possible that you should have been born and reared at Castle Harrington, without having been taught to shudder at the name of Vincent?"

It was in an accent from which all mirth had fled, that Bertha answered, "I was born and reared at Castle Harrington, but it was by my mother."

"And you have lost her, my poor cousin?" returned the young man, glancing at her dress, and then at the pale fair face which interpreted with such painful eloquence the cause for which she wore it. It was by tears, despite her utmost efforts to restrain them, that Bertha replied to this question; and Vincent, waiting for no other answer, explained in a tone of most genuine, and not-to-be-mistaken sympathy, the various causes which had conspired to prevent his having heard of her loss. "Not only have I been travelling during the last year," he continued, "in so desul-

tory a style as to render all regular communication of intelligence from home impossible ; my good-natured pupil having *carte blanche* in this respect from his over-indulgent father ; but however gentle your lamented mother's feelings may have been towards the unfortunate inhabitants of Everton Park, the master of that luckless mansion has for years past avoided the naming Harrington Castle, and every thing connected with it, as if the doing so could bring him face to face with the relation who, though now, I believe, the only one he has left in the world, appears to be the object of his most unmitigated hatred. But I know there was a time, dearest Bertha, when our poor mothers loved each other ; and it is to the remembrances left by this kind feeling in the heart of Lady Harrington, that I owe the gentle reception which you have given to your forbidden cousin ; for that I do 'live a man forbid' in the estimation of your father, I cannot doubt."

"Your name, at least," replied Bertha, "is with him a name forbid, for I never heard it, save from my dear mother ; but from her very, oh ! very often. Perhaps you were too young to remember it, but before my unhappy mother mar-

ried, she was staying on a visit of many months with yours, and it was there indeed that she met—" Bertha stopped. It seemed to her at that moment as if her lips had not the power of pronouncing the word "father;" again the rebellious tears rushed to her eyes, and suddenly conscious of the many looks that might be directed towards her, she exclaimed, "May I not go home?"

Mr. Vincent rose, and standing before her so as almost to prevent her being seen, he said, "Nothing would draw upon you so much attention as attempting to leave the room at this moment, my dear cousin. You are not, I am quite certain, one of those who are apt to give way to every emotion. Sit quietly for a minute or two, dear Bertha, and you will recover yourself. Oh no," he resumed, perceiving that his remonstrance was not lost on his young relative; "oh no, I was not only old enough at the time you mention to enable me to remember your mother, but I was old enough to love her dearly; and it was the remembrance of this feeling, and of all the sweet gentle kindness which produced it, that determined me to brave a possible rebuff from the daughter of

Sir Christopher Harrington, for the chance that I might find the daughter like her mother."

"You were ever and always remembered by her with tender affection," replied Bertha, almost smiling at him, though something very like a sob accompanied her words, "and that was the reason why I was determined, when you asked me to dance, that I would really make acquaintance with you, and make you find out who I was. I found *you* out because the young gentleman, your pupil, asked me whether my family were related to the Harrington Vincents of Everton Park, adding that his tutor was the son of Mr. Harrington Vincent; and then I remembered all the thousand things I had heard about you and your mother from my own dear mamma:"—and once again the face of poor Bertha became utterly unfit for a ball-room. Mr. Vincent, who the moment before had been thinking he might venture to resume his place beside her, now seemed to think it best that he should continue standing, and he did so; but it was very gaily, notwithstanding her falling tears, that he repeated the words, "Young gentleman!"

"The young gentleman, my pupil," he added,

laughing, "is at this moment exceedingly in love with Miss Bertha Harrington; but worthy as that young lady is of inspiring such a passion, I own I greatly doubt whether the constancy of Lord Lynberry could stand such a phrase as that! The young gentleman! Why, my dear little cousin, what would you call him if he were still at Eton?"

"I should call him as I do now," replied Bertha, laughing at the reproachful look and accent which accompanied the question; "and though he is your pupil, cousin William," she added, using the appellation which her mother had made familiar to her, "I not only think that he looks like a school-boy, but rather a silly one."

This opinion was gaily combated, and by degrees the young tutor had the pleasure of perceiving that his lovely cousin was again fit to be seen.

"What a vulgar-minded girl Bertha Harrington must be!" said Maria Roberts to her sister Agatha, as they both stood up again to dance a quadrille with the same partners with whom they had danced the waltz. "Lord Lynberry thinks

her exceedingly handsome, he says, but he declares that she is so shy, it is the most difficult thing in the world to make her speak. But just look at her now. She was too shy, awkward creature! to say a word to Lord Lynberry, but she can flirt fast enough with his tutor."

"It is the natural effect of her having been brought up in an out-of-the-way country place," replied Agatha. "Bertha Harrington has not the slightest notion, in any way, of fashionable life and manners. But as to her preferring that handsome Vincent to his pupil, I think something might be said in her excuse, though I doubt if she would have *savoir vivre* enough to find it out. Lynberry is such a mere boy!" But at this moment Mr. Montgomery drew near, and the whole person of the fair Agatha, even to the very skirts of her clothing, seemed to feel the influence of his approach; for there was a general flutter from her ringlets to the lowest tier of her flounces, that left not, as it seemed, a single particle of her garments, or herself, unmoved. Maria, however, was not in a state of mind to notice these too evident indications of strong emotion, for the manner in which the name of Lord Lynberry had

been mentioned, had in it something too offensive to be borne. And she turned from the rash speaker with feelings of mingled contempt and anger, stronger than she would have wished to express before any third person. "I know it is only mortification and envy, because he did not ask her to dance," she murmured to herself as she walked away. "Poor Agatha! it is folly to feel angry with her. It is all very natural, poor thing! But oh! she knows not what she has lost! No! nor she never can! Lynberry will never show himself for what he really is, save to the happy being whom his taste selects as a partner, either for a dance or for life! But to such he is like a creature inspired! The die is cast!" she added, in secret confusion, and with a secret sigh. "This night is the crisis of my destiny—and either misery that might draw pity from a stone, or bliss that the gods might envy, must be my portion!"

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As to the young Lord Lynberry himself, he was much less able to describe the state of his own feelings when he left the ball-room than when he entered it. He had not said a syllable,

in his conversation with Vincent, upon the subject of his passion for Miss Harrington, which he did not believe to be strictly true; and, to a certain degree, it was so—that is to say, he did really and truly intend to marry her at the first possible opportunity. But concerning the immortal nature of his passion, he made a little mistake; for whatever might have been its perennial constancy had the young lady looked at him with the same sort of look that Miss Maria did, her cold glance, and the effect produced by the evident fact that, although Bertha did not catch the meaning of above one word in three of all he had said to her, whilst her rival *felt* each syllable he spoke almost before it had fully passed his lips, shook its durability to the very centre; and it is certain that he not only suffered Mr. Vincent to hand his newly-found cousin into the carriage, but when he performed the same office to the fair Maria, he squeezed her hand so decidedly, as effectually to prevent her obtaining a single moment's sleep till past three o'clock in the morning.

But perhaps the most extraordinary change of all, was that produced upon the intellectual portion of Mr. Edward Roberts. In his case it was

not the heart, but the head which had undergone this process. He had entered the room as firmly determined to marry Bertha Harrington as even Lord Lynberry himself; but unlike his lordship, he had left it without having this determination in the least degree shaken. The change consisted in the new-born resolution of setting about the necessary preliminaries immediately. He had heard her called "beautiful" by every man he had spoken to during the evening; "lovely" by two of the lords who adorned the assembly, and "angelic" by the third—and Edward Roberts felt that he must trifle no longer.

CHAPTER VI.

THE first fruits of this "most delightful ball" to the Roberts family were morning visits from several of their partners, all of whom had somehow or other contrived to get what was held by all the parties concerned, as a sufficient introduction to justify their doing so. Is it necessary to describe how energetically beautiful the two Miss Robertses became, as these enchanting consequences of their last night's success developed themselves? Is it necessary to say, that the view from one window offered something indescribably fascinating to Agatha and Mr. Montgomery? Or that the other had something to show which made

Maria, and perhaps Lord Lynberry too, forget that she was standing instead of sitting; and moreover, that she had been turning her back for a most unmercifully long time upon the rest of the company?

As to Bertha, she was rambling abroad, so that she neither made nor marred the pleasure of any body. Mr. Vincent was among the visitors; he did not, however, stay long, but his absence was scarcely remarked, for before he went there were no less than four of the most "fashionable" men at the baths, shedding light through the atmosphere of Mrs. Roberts's drawing-room. When the whole of this bright constellation had become visible, the two young ladies felt that the hour for *tête-à-tête* indulgence of more tender sentiments was, for the time, over; and each, nearly at the same moment, returning from her window, took possession of a *bergère*, and adorned the circle with eloquence to which eyes, ringlets, hands, feet, pocket-handkerchiefs, eye-glasses, and smelling-bottles, all contributed, as well as the rosy lips which gave forth in addition sweet glimpses of the intellectual treasures within. Perhaps at that moment, it would have been im-

possible to find, over the entire surface of the globe called earth, two happier young ladies. Yet perhaps even their high-wrought felicity did not exceed that of their triumphant mother. Who was it that had brought them there? Who was it had taken a Balcony House to put them in, with elegant arm-chairs made on purpose to show off fine girls who knew how to make the best of themselves? What would they have been, in comparison, without those lovely silk morning dresses, which set off their shapes so divinely? Yes, it was a triumph to remember how she had gone on, and on, and on, in defiance of danger and difficulty, till she had brought them to such a state as this! And then to see Edward enter, looking fifty times handsomer than either of the four "*first rates*" who graced her drawing-room! She was a happy mother, and she felt it in every fibre, as she sat a little apart, testifying her measureless content by a constantly renewed smile, and a sort of purring sound, which she emitted every time either of the gentlemen said any thing loud enough for her to hear; and which, while it plainly indicated her admiration, had little or no tendency to draw upon herself the invaluable

eloquence which, with all a mother's fond devotion, she delighted to yield, unshared, to the eagerly devouring ears of her children. But great as was the enjoyment of this seemingly idle hour to the daughters and the son of Mrs. Roberts, they suffered it not to pass by them "*unimproved*"—that is to say, they took care to make the most of it in the way of a wedge, to open the way to future intercourse and closer intimacy with their new friends.

"*A propos*," said the lively Edward, after hearing Mr. Montgomery declare that he had seen prettier English women at Baden than at all the other places he had visited since he left London. "*A propos*, where do you mean to dine, ma'am?"

"Dine? my dear boy, why at home, to be sure," replied his smiling mother, to whom his question had been addressed. "Where else should we dine, Edward? Dinner parties do not seem to be at all the fashion on the continent; and even if they were, you know, we have not been here long enough to have made any dining acquaintance. But it is so natural," she added, turning to Lord Lynberry, "for young men who are very much used to dining out in London, to

fancy that they shall find something of the same kind abroad."

Lord Lynberry intended to answer as soon as he could succeed in withdrawing his eye-glass from the playful fingers of Maria, which had got entangled in the plaited string of hair by which it was suspended, and which she had declared she must examine, in order to ascertain the complexion of his lordship's lady love—and before, long before this release was accomplished, Edward replied with a gay laugh, and winking at the same time to Mr. Montgomery, "All dining out, my good lady, does not depend upon receiving invitations. My question was put for the purpose of learning whether you intended to patronise a *table d'hôte*, or dine *à la carte*. I did not suspect you of plotting such treason against us as proposing to dine at home."

Mrs. Roberts coloured violently, and was, to say truth, exceedingly embarrassed by her doubts as to what she ought to reply. And there certainly was great difficulty in the question. In the first place she did not quite forget, even in that moment of exhilarating success, that it always

cost a great deal more to dine out than to dine at home ; and in the second, she knew no more than the man in the moon whether it would be more *bon-ton* to reply with a little *hauteur*, “at home, Edward, most assuredly ;” or, “at the *table d’hôte*, *mon cher* ;” or, “*à la carte*, beyond all doubt.” However paradoxical it may appear, it was her habit of prompt and authoritative decision, which now rendered it so difficult for her to reply at all. Had it entered her head to say to Lord Lynberry (who was *the* great man *par excellence*), “Which should your lordship advise?” the matter would have been immediately settled in the most agreeable manner possible ; but this was not her way, and therefore, after betraying sufficient embarrassment to keep her young visitors from volunteering any opinion on the subject, she replied, “Upon my word, my dear, I don’t know. We must think about it.”

The delicate feelings of her son were so painfully wounded by this reply, which he was quite certain would suggest suspicions of the most vulgar economy to his invaluable new friend, that, thoughtless of the consequences to his equally

distressed sisters, he started up, saying to the gentlemen, *en masse*, "Let us go and look at the tables—shall we?"

The proposal was one of those which could scarcely be negatived without assigning a reason, and neither of the gentlemen in the present state of affairs chose to say that they had rather remain where they were; so they all rose as by one common impulse, and in two short minutes the room which had been the very gayest in all Baden, became one of the most melancholy in the whole world. For the space of two more minutes, now most sadly long, silence unbroken followed the closing of the drawing-room door. For which of the metamorphosed three who were left within it, could have braved the danger of being overheard, as the first burst of feeling rushed from her lips? But this interval over, and the retreating figures of the five young men become visible on the broad road which led to the rooms, all their three voices became audible at once. "Idiot!" "Abominable!" "I never will forgive him," were the first words that could be distinguished; and then for a moment the tongue of the mother gained the ascendant, as she said, in a voice of mingled

rage and mortification, "What on earth could he mean by asking me such an absurd question?"

"Oh! as to that, ma'am, the absurdity was entirely your own," replied Agatha, whose mind, becoming every hour more fully developed, was rapidly breaking down the inconvenient restraints of filial deference. "Nobody in the world but yourself would have given such an answer as you did. I am sure I don't know, as yet—how should I, or how should you either?—whether it is *bon-ton* or *mauvais* to dine at a Baden *table d'hôte*. But you might have given Edward credit for having *some* motive for what he said. Of course it is not so important to him as it is to us, not to disgust the first men of real fashion that we have got acquainted with since we left our musty-fusty Baker-street; nevertheless, you might be very sure, ma'am, that such a young man as Edward knows the value for his own sake, as well as for ours, of getting intimate with such men as we have had here to-day. And it was downright madness, as well as barbarity, to set him down in the manner you did."

"Mamma was wrong, there is no doubt about that," said Maria. "But that is no excuse for

Edward, no, not the least in the world, Agatha—and I never *will* forgive him. You know best what degree of attention Mr. Montgomery may have paid to you, but I am quite capable of judging of Lord Lynberry's manner to me. As to Lord Clanballygough, or Sir Simpson Sanders, or any body else at the baths, I don't pretend to form any opinion; and, in fact, I don't care a single farthing about them all. Whether they have titles or no titles—fifty thousand a year or fifty pence—it is all the same to me. But it would be the grossest falsehood and affectation if I were to say the same respecting Lord Lynberry; and I never can forgive Edward for taking him away at such a moment.”

“ Yes, Maria, Edward was excessively to blame,” said Agatha, “ there *is* no doubt about it; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, you and I are not the only ones who would have liked to box his ears for it. But that makes no difference as to the excessive folly of my mother's answer to him.”

“ Upon my word, Miss Agatha,” returned Mrs. Roberts, rousing the courage which never was in such danger of quailing as when her eldest daugh-

ter ran a tilt at her, "I do think it would be as well if you weighed your words before you uttered them. You confess that *you* don't know whether it is genteel or vulgar to dine at a *table d'hôte*, and how should *I* know? Now just suppose that it is the vulgarest thing possible—which I suspect it is—how should you have liked to have heard me say in reply to Edward's silly point-blank question, '*We will dine at a table d'hôte, my dear?*'"

"You need not have given a point-blank answer because he asked a point-blank question," replied Agatha. "You must know, ma'am, or at least I am sure you ought to know, that it does not signify a straw where we dine. The only question of any real consequence is, *who will dine with us?* And that was the question which Edward meant to bring upon the *tapis*, which was exactly the best thing he could do—although I by no means wish to defend his conduct afterwards. That was cruel and unfeeling in the greatest degree, and no provocation can excuse it."

"Provocation indeed! What provocation did I give him?" cried Mrs. Roberts, vehemently,

being almost equally provoked by the lamentable effect of her words, and at the blame thrown upon them. "What would you have had me say, Agatha?"

"I would not have had you cut the matter short, ma'am, in the cruel manner you did," replied her daughter, with a good deal of severity in her tone. "A single moment's consideration would have made you aware that Edward meant by what he said, to open some sort of discussion, with those excessively pleasant people that you have so driven away, upon the subject of dining together. And did not those hateful words of yours, '*we must think about it*,' say as plainly as any words could do, that *they* were to know nothing about the matter, nor in any way to have any thing to do with us?"

"Good gracious! no, Agatha," replied Mrs. Roberts, but in a tone greatly softened by the glimpse her daughter's words afforded her of the mischief she had really done. "Heaven is my witness," she continued, "that I would have put my hand in the fire, rather than have done or said any thing that might check what was going on so beautifully." And here poor Mrs. Roberts actual-

ly drew forth her pocket-handkerchief and wiped her eyes. "And do you think," she resumed, "that it is no pleasure to me to see how that charming young man, the Right Honourable Lord Lynberry, has thrown Miss Bertha overboard, and devoted himself heart and soul to Maria? Do you think I don't feel it, and glory in it?" And the good lady sobbed from the vehemence of her mixed emotions.

The heart of Maria was softened.

"It is no good to fret about it now, mamma," said she, forgivingly, "and, unless my heart deceives me, Lynberry will give you many opportunities of atoning for the error you have committed. It is not one word which will send him off, I think."

"I hope so," replied Agatha, in a tone that gave great weight and authority to her opinion; "and I hope, and I believe also, that the same may be said of Mr. Montgomery, who in my humble opinion is worth all the lords in the peerage, ten times over. But nevertheless, ma'am, we must not trust every thing to the strength of their sentiments in our favour. It would be only preparing heartaches for ourselves, were we to

forget that men so exquisitely fascinating as Montgomery, and so distinguished as Lord Lynberry, are sure to be surrounded by all that is most lovely and attractive, let them go where they will; and it is not very likely they will endure to be treated with rudeness, or even with coldness, by those to whom they pay such flattering attention as they have done to us."

"Rudeness! coldness!" exclaimed Mrs. Roberts, clasping her hands in an agony; "as if I was likely to treat them with rudeness or coldness! Upon my word, Agatha, you will drive me wild if you talk so. What may happen next, Heaven knows. Edward may come down on me with some other puzzling question, and for what I know I may answer it in a way to make his lordship, and your elegant Mr. Montgomery, order post horses, and set off to the world's end. In common ordinary concerns, I am not afraid to say that I would trust my judgment, and my management too, against those of any woman in Christendom; but it is no good to deny that all this business about noblemen, and *table d'hôtes*, and *diners sur la carte*, and all the rest of it, is too much for me. I shall soon get into the way of it

all, and quicker perhaps than most other people would do ; but just now, upon my word and honour, girls, you must tell me exactly what I am to say, and what I am to do."

" Nothing can be more fair, ma'am," said Agatha, promptly, and not a little pleased at perceiving that the struggle in which she had been for some time engaged with her honoured mother for supremacy, was likely to terminate so favourably. " I am the last person in the world who would wish to blame any one for not understanding what they know nothing about. All I would ask of you, all we would any of us ask of you, is not to put any obstacles in the way of any thing being done, that you may see us anxious to do. We may not be able to explain it all to you at the moment, but you may depend upon it, ma'am, we shall take care to make you understand it afterwards, and *then* you will always find we have been right. The business of this morning has certainly been most unfortunate ; but let us hope that it will not prove fatal. I have little doubt that Edward, when he is cool enough to reflect, will be aware that however wrong you were, he was at least equally so, for giving way to a

burst of temper in a manner which threatened the destruction of all we most value; and then we may be sure he will endeavour to undo the mischief he has done."

"Heaven grant he may succeed!" said Maria, with a deep sigh; "but it may be more easy to wish than to perform."

"I don't know that," returned Agatha, with cheering confidence. "Where two or more parties have got to act together, and all are desirous of coming to the same result, the chances are in favour of their succeeding."

"But how do we know, Agatha, that these first-rate young men may not have something else in their heads, that they may like quite as well as dining with us?" said Mrs. Roberts, with an air of considerable sagacity.

"That is very true, ma'am," replied Agatha, exchanging a slight smile with her sister; "we can only guess. However, you know it is quite as well to be prepared for whatever may happen. What I should propose is this. The carriage will be here almost immediately; it came when our friends were sitting with us, but I gave Edward his cue, and he ran down stairs and ordered it to

go away and return in two hours; when it comes, we must divide, ma'am. Either you or I must drive to the rooms, the library, you know, and all other places, and the other must stay at home. It is possible that Edward may come back here again, in the hope of settling something pleasant about dinner, and if he does, what we have to do is only to agree to it, for you may be perfectly sure that he knows what we wish for—perfectly. And if he and his friends are encountered at the rooms, the same thing must be done. I do not care a farthing whether I go or stay; you may take your choice, ma'am; but only take care that you really understand what you are going to do."

"I understand perfectly, Agatha," replied Mrs. Roberts, feeling a little restive, perhaps, at being thus suddenly reduced to passive obedience; "but there is one point upon which I suspect you have not yet turned your attention. This dining in company with these gay young gentlemen, my dear, will cost more, perhaps, than your papa may be inclined to pay; not to mention, young ladies, that he cannot be left out of the party, just as if he was dead and buried. I am sure I

am not inclined to make too much fuss about him, but there is reason in every thing, Agatha."

"And pray, ma'am, who but yourself has ever said a word about my father's being left out of the party? I am sure that neither Maria nor I ever had such an idea. And as to the expense, ma'am, I really believe that this is the first time since travelling was invented, that a *table d'hôte* was supposed to be an expensive mode of dining. It is, on the contrary, so notoriously cheap, that in a general way it is considered, I know, as rather a vulgar thing to do. But such a party, you know, would reconcile one to every thing. However, you may very safely tell papa that you think it right to make the experiment, before you begin ordering dinners at home, thinking it very likely, you may say, from what you have been told, that a *table d'hôte* is the very cheapest way of dining in the world."

"And now you mention it, Agatha," replied her mother, "I perfectly well remember that I *have* heard so, and into the bargain, I am sure I have heard also that it was very vulgar too, my dear; and I own I should be rather afraid

that we might lose a little in the estimation of his lordship by being seen at such an inferior place."

"Trust to me upon that point, mamma, I beg of you," said Agatha. "Were they to meet us there by accident, I won't deny that it might be so; but when young people particularly wish to be together, they do not reckon any thing vulgar which enables them to gratify that wish. Besides, you know, it is exceedingly easy to let them see by our manner and conversation that we are not used to it, and they will only be the more gratified by our going there to meet them—that feeling of course must be reciprocal."

"Yes, to be sure, that is quite true. And here comes the carriage, Agatha. It is you, my dear, that must stay at home, because I must chaperon your sister. I wonder where that poor silly creature, Bertha, is wandering? If she comes in, Agatha, take care to be civil to her. God knows what would become of us, launching out as we do every day more and more, if she were to take it into her head to go away from us!" said Mrs. Roberts, with a groan.

"It will be easy enough to prevent that,

ma'am, I should think, if we choose it," muttered Agatha.

"I don't know, my dear, I am sure," replied her mother, hastening away to equip herself for her drive; "young girls are very headstrong sometimes."

CHAPTER VII.

CONSIDERABLY before four o'clock, which at the time I am writing of was the hour fixed for the most approved *table d'hôte* at Baden-Baden, the joint exertions of the junior members of the Roberts family, sanctioned by the acquiescence of their excellent mother, had succeeded in making an appointment with Lord Lynberry and Mr. Montgomery to join their party there at that hour. Never, perhaps, even for the very finest ball that their Parisian good fortune had bestowed upon them, had their toilets been a matter of such anxious care to the two young ladies as they were upon this occasion. Detail upon such a subject

must ever be idle and superfluous. Let the imagination of every reader suggest the probable result of the Miss Robertses' efforts to look the perfection of elegance, in dresses which they could not venture to make perfectly *décolletés*, but which, for a multitude of reasons, they could not endure should be absolutely the reverse. The two sisters took different means for obtaining the object they had in view, and which succeeded best it would be difficult to say. Agatha did *l'impossible* to render a morning dress almost as fascinating as an evening one could have been; while Maria's ingenuity exerted itself in the construction of a fanciful preparation of transparent gauze, which she flattered herself produced the bewitching effect of the demi-toilette of a Frenchwoman, without losing much of the less shyly displayed attractions of English full dress. Both sisters were conscious that they had been eminently successful, and the pretty faces of both wore that smiling look of inward satisfaction which marks a high-toned mental preparation for enjoyment. As to Bertha Harrington, they could not at such a moment consider her of sufficient importance to occupy any part of their attention, or they might

have been aware that they had never before seen her look so beautiful, or appear so happy. There would be something perfectly unfeeling in leaving the radiant heart-swelling contentment of the Roberts family at this moment, in order to describe the solitary walk of Bertha amidst the ruins of the Alt Schloss; suffice it to say, therefore, that she had not felt so happy since the terrible death of her mother first taught her to know what sorrow was, as she had done during the three hours passed in boldly, fearlessly, and alone, climbing from crag to crag, and from stone to stone, so strangely mixed together as hardly to be known apart, while half blinding herself at one moment in gazing at the novel clearness of the bright blue heaven, and almost congealing herself to an icicle the next, under the impenetrable shade of the dark forest. And now, kind reader, awaken your imagination, and behold the party. The open carriage, decorated with the blue shawl and the black mantle, conveyed the four ladies, attended by the good-natured Mr. Roberts on the box, to the widely opened doors of the gay-looking hôtel at which the favourite *table d'hôte* of the baths was to be found. Before these open doors, grouping them-

selves with a fine oleander tree on one side, and a splendid pomegranate on the other, stood the young Lord Lynberry, the handsome Montgomery, and the brilliant Mr. Edward Roberts. In justice to the consistency of Mr. Roberts, *père*, it may be observed, *en passant*, that his lady, having found him most obstinately persuaded that it was cheaper to furnish dinner for half a dozen persons at home than at an hôtel, found herself obliged at length to have recourse to the wilfulness of Bertha Harrington, who had, she said, given her very clearly to understand that she considered four hundred a-year too much to pay for living with any family who could not indulge themselves in the occasional variety of dining at a *table d'hôte*.

“There is some sense in that, my dear,” replied the worthy man. “I dare say the hôtel will show us more fun than our lodgings; and four hundred is a long figure, there is no doubt of that; only I think you must try, Sarah, not to let her get it into her head that it is advisable to do it very often. When one has got to pay six times over, you know, it comes to money; and I don’t feel quite certain either, that it can be counted altogether so genteel for people so grand as we seem to

be now, my dear, to go to eat our dinner at an inn, instead of at home, though it may be more amusing."

"I conceive that you are quite right, sir," replied Mrs. Roberts, "and this must of course convince you that *I* can have no particular partiality for the scheme. In fact I feel that it will be necessary to comport ourselves in such a manner as to show that it is not a sort of thing that we are much accustomed to, or greatly approve. It is a mere whim, a caprice of the young people. It pleases Lynberry, and he is such a dear creature, that one does not like to refuse him any thing."

"And over and above, my dear, you are quite sure, I hope, that Miss Bertha Harrington wishes it?"

"Yes, sir, of course I am," was the reply of Mrs. Roberts, and the matter was settled.

There was at first some slight shadow of doubt among the Roberts party, as to how the gentlemen and ladies were to arrange themselves to make their *entrée*. For a moment the tender Maria felt literally sick at heart, as she remembered the eager attentions of Lord Lynberry to Miss Harrington during the first part of the preceding

evening. Should he begin in the same manner now, she was lost! for at dinner there was no changing of partners, and as things began so they must go on. Nor were her terrors by any means unfounded. Lord Lynberry had by no means forgotten that he had fallen vehemently in love with Bertha Harrington, neither had he in any degree changed his opinion as to the fact that she was ten thousand times over the handsomest girl at the baths; and therefore when the Roberts equipage first stopped, his eye had decidedly sought her out from amidst the charming group it contained. He sought and he found her. But how? How did he find the charming creature to whom he had so frankly avowed his admiration on the preceding evening? There she was, looking indeed as lovely, or lovelier than ever. But where was the delicious sympathy, which he had never failed to find, wherever he had bestowed even a glance of admiration, from the age of fourteen until now? Her absence in the morning he had persuaded himself might have been accidental. She did not know he would call; or, young as she was, and so entirely new to the world, might she not doubt her own powers of attraction? Perhaps

she might have gone out expressly to avoid the painful feeling of hope delayed? Such varying thoughts as these, and many more of the same nature and complexion, had brought his young lordship's mind back again into the most agreeable state imaginable; and when the expected equipage arrived, it found him in such high spirits, and so resolutely determined to make love all dinner time, that it would have required some very harsh interference on the part of destiny to prevent it. But where was the sympathy he looked for in the eyes of Bertha? 'There they were indeed, those matchless eyes, neither veiled by their own dark lashes, nor hid from him by any other obstruction whatever; but wide open, radiant in youth and joy, tempered only by that soft expression of heartfelt happiness which rather melts into dew than blazes into light. But alas! they were not turned upon him! No! they were intently fixed upon the towering mountain amidst whose forests she had been wandering with such deep delight; and at the instant the carriage stopped she had just decided in her own wilful young mind, that she would set out still earlier on the following day than she had done on this, and devote the whole

long morning to prowling about the old ruin. Why might she not hope, by courage and perseverance, to discover the secret passage between the upper castle and the lower one?—a passage so confidently stated to exist by all the volumes she had consulted on the subject, and leading to that most mysterious spot on earth; the *oubliette* of the secret tribunal.

With such thoughts working in her young head, she cared no more for all the young lords in creation than if they had been so many butterflies; and when at length she condescended to accept an offered hand, and descend from the pleasant elevation which had given her so good a view of her dear Alt Schloss, this indifference looked out from her admired eyes with so much eloquent sincerity, that the noble young lover, who had so recently vowed to marry her in defiance of the whole world, became cured of his passion as suddenly as if a strong dose of Puck's distillation from the "little purple flower" had been administered to his eyelids. In truth, the Lord Lynberry, though a very good-natured sort of young man, was not of a character to endure such a look as that, unchanged. He was exceed-

ingly inflammable—not choleric, but amatory; and moreover, he was, to say truth, prodigiously vain; and both these propensities together made the falling in love and being *adored* in return, the favourite occupation of his life. As yet this occupation had caused him incomparably more pleasure than pain; nor was it very likely that it should soon be otherwise; for his propensity to falling in love, and his persuasion that he must be fallen in love with in return, were so well balanced, that it was scarcely possible for either to obtain an inconvenient preponderance. A proof of this was most pleasantly offered on the present occasion. His young lordship had begun the Baden-Baden season by falling in love with Bertha Harrington, and by being fallen in love with by Maria Roberts. In most cases such an untoward mismatching of tender passion might have led to much vexation. But the happy temperament of Lord Lynberry most fortunately prevented this. At the very moment that his ardent glance and animated salutation to Miss Harrington were answered by a look so vacant and unmeaning as to leave him doubtful whether she remembered his person or his name, a sudden and

eager movement brought the pretty face of Maria Roberts full before his eyes ; and before he had quite determined whether to resent or deprecate the cruel indifference of Bertha, the question was settled for him, and his tender heart once more pierced through and through, by such a glance from the expressive eyes of Maria, as could leave no doubt on such a mind as his, that *she* at least loved him as he deserved to be loved.

No juggling conjuration that ever was performed could have produced a more sudden and complete change than did this eloquent glance. Disappointment melted before it ; new hopes were hatched as in a hot-bed ; and his freshly enamoured young lordship sprang forward, presented his arm to the fluttered and flattered fair one, to whom he had determined to devote himself for the rest of the day, and perhaps for the rest of his life, and led the way into the spacious room where the *table d'hôte* was prepared. His selection of a partner being made, all the rest was easy. Mr. Roberts presented his arm to Mrs. Roberts, and led her on ; Mr. Montgomery approached the fair Agatha with a tender smile that seemed to say he was her willing thrall, and they walked on

together ; and then Mr. Edward, conscious of being rather slower than he ought to be, but feeling perfectly sure, nevertheless, that the moment he set himself seriously to the task of winning the stupid heiress, he should be sure to succeed, held his arm in such a position that Bertha might put hers through it if she chose—and not very well knowing what else to do, she did it ; and in this order the party marched on, till the first couple came to a halt, at the head of the table.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING reached the farthest, or upper end of the large and handsome room in which the *table d'hôte* was spread, Lord Lynberry and Maria, who had marched on in front of the party, turned round, both because they could go no farther, and because they wished to reconnoitre the scene of action from the commanding point they had gained. A very long, but rather narrow table, capable of accommodating above fifty guests, stretched down the middle of the room. A long line of gaudily-coloured oil-cloth, with a number of little plates arranged symmetrically upon it,

was spread down the middle of the table, from the top to the bottom. The little plates contained, for the most part, pink and white sugar-plums, small Savoy biscuits, and walnuts, placed in a circle of six, round a seventh by way of a centre.

The three couples who had followed Lord Lynberry and his fair companion to this point, turned as they turned, and the following words were spoken between the respective couples. Lord Lynberry, on whose left arm Maria's right clung timidly, laid his right hand upon it with a friendly and familiar pressure, which made her quiver from head to foot with inexpressible delight, and said, "How very un-English it all looks, doesn't it? I hope you will like it. Do you think you shall?" To which she replied, in accents which did justice to her words, "Oh! as for me, I never care where I am, so that those I like are with me!" It was a pretty and a gentle speech, and she was rewarded by feeling her arm very kindly pressed against the grateful heart of his young lordship. *How* this apparently slight action affected her feelings, the intelligent reader need not be told.

Mr. Roberts and his lady made the second couple.

“What a queer way they have of laying their tables, to be sure!” exclaimed Mr. Roberts. “It does not look very comfortable, my dear, does it?”

“Comfortable? Good gracious, Mr. Roberts! who but you would ever think about being comfortable in such delightful society as we have got into here!” replied his wife. “Just observe his lordship and Maria, that’s all, and raise up your thoughts, if you can, to what it must be to have a countess for a daughter.”

These last words were uttered in a low whisper very close to the gentleman’s ear, which suggested the necessity of caution so successfully to him, that the only rejoinder was a close pressure of the arm.

“It is an amusing scene,” said the elegant Montgomery, looking, as his magnificent stature permitted, over the heads of the company; “but how impossible it is to find,” he added, looking down very fully into the upturned eyes of his attentive companion—“how perfectly impossible it is to find a single one of all the native faces

which can bear comparison with that of an Englishwoman!"

Of course Agatha smiled, and having sustained the glance for half a moment, cast down her eyes, and, by a trifling movement of her head, easily managed to make her superabundant ringlets do the office of a veil, to hide the conscious blush to which the compliment had given birth.

"Well? what d'ye think of it?" said Edward to Miss Harrington. "I delight in it of all things, myself, it is so devilish amusing. And they say the champagne is capital. But of course I shan't like it at all unless you do."

This was by far the tenderest speech which Bertha's intended bridegroom had ever yet addressed to her, and she made the most direct reply to it that she had ever yet uttered in return to any of his small attempts at conversation—for she not only appeared to have heard what he said, but distinctly answered, by pronouncing the monosyllable "Why?"

But before the young gentleman could sufficiently rally his spirits to profit by this admirable opportunity of explaining himself, a movement of the party behind obliged them to move on.

“Those are our chairs!” exclaimed Lord Lynberry, pushing forward rather eagerly. “Montgomery and I turned them down ourselves. We must not let those fellows get possession of them.”

The party accordingly moved on, *en masse*, to the point indicated; and a waiter having already established their prior claim to the bespoke chairs, they immediately took possession of their places, although the company in general were still amusing themselves by walking up and down the room.

“I am afraid we must not expect to find very elegant company—I mean the sort of people that we have been used to—at such a place as this,” said Mrs. Roberts, taking this opportunity of beginning the system of precaution, by which she intended to guard the family dignity from any injury that a *table d’hôte* might bring upon it. “But where there are a party of gay young people together,” she added, “it signifies very little who may chance to be at the same table with them, provided they take care, you know, to keep themselves *to themselves*.”

“Oh dear no, certainly, not the least in the

world," replied Mr. Montgomery, to whom, from the circumstance of his sitting opposite to her, this speech was particularly addressed. "But why do you suspect the company of being particularly objectionable to-day?" he added, fixing his eyes upon two very simply-dressed females, who at that moment were placing themselves at the table, while two middle-aged men, who accompanied them, instead of sitting down beside them, stood behind their chairs.

"Yes, yes, you have hit the mark," said Mrs. Roberts, laughing, and nodding her head very expressively up and down. "Not quite in our way, that, is it?" she added, as her eyes fixed themselves very unceremoniously upon the group Mr. Montgomery had been looking at. The handsome Englishman smiled slightly, but said nothing.

"Mercy on me!" resumed Mrs. Roberts, her eyes still fixed upon the same party, "I hope it won't be too bad to bear! Do you think it will, my dear sir? If you do, we had really better take the girls away at once, you know."

This sudden anxiety on the part of Mrs. Roberts was occasioned by the two females above

mentioned, first one and then the other, deliberately taking off their bonnets, and giving them to the two whiskered male individuals who stood behind them. The smooth little heads thus uncovered, had not a single hair arranged in a style which appeared fit, in the judgment of Mrs. Roberts, to be displayed at a table where "first-rate ladies and gentlemen," as she said, condescended to sit down to dinner; and this fact, together with that of their smiling very familiarly to the two whiskered gentlemen, as they indicated the pegs against the wall, upon which it was their pleasure to have their bonnets hung, suggested some very painful ideas to her mind, not only respecting their rank and fortune, but their respectability also.

"You know we are perfectly strangers here, my dear Mr. Montgomery," she said, throwing her ample person as far as she could across the table, in order to speak to him in a whisper, "and I do not scruple to say that I trust entirely to you, as to the propriety of our remaining at the table. For myself, I really should look on, for once and a way, with perfect indifference, quite certain that nothing of the sort could really injure *me*. But

for my darling girls!—need I express to you what my feelings are on their account? Dear young creatures!—so innocent, so trusting! Do you think that for their sakes, and for that of Mr. Roberts's ward, dear little Ber ha Harrington, we ought to leave the society of those dreadfully suspicious-looking people? Answer me as if you were their brother, my dear sir."

"I feel of course inexpressibly flattered by your reference, my dear madam," replied the young man; "and to the best of my knowledge and belief, your charming daughters will run no risk whatever in remaining at table with the persons who have just taken their seats at the upper end of it."

There was a curling sort of smile about the handsome mouth of Mr. Montgomery as he said this, which puzzled Mrs. Roberts. It was impossible for her to suppose he was laughing at her anxiety—that was too severe an idea to conceive of any man; but still she strongly suspected he *was* joking in some way or other, and her dignity took the alarm. She looked steadily at him with an air of very grave scrutiny for a minute or two, and then said, "I am quite sure, Mr. Mont-

gomery, that nobody appearing so perfectly a person of fashion as you do, could possibly jest upon such a subject with such a person as myself; and yet, forgive me! I cannot help fancying that you know something about those strange-looking women which you do not choose to mention to me, and that the recollection of it, let it be what it may, makes you feel inclined to laugh. Perhaps, however, it is only something about their being so particularly ignorant as to dress? But if that is all, I don't care for it in the least. So that my own dear girls are elegantly dressed, and look as young ladies of fashion ought to do, I don't care a farthing how other people look. Why should I? But I am sure you *do* know something about those women, Mr. Montgomery; and to tell you the truth, I really think that if you do not choose to tell me what it is, I must communicate my suspicions to Mr. Roberts, and desire him without further ceremony to lead us all out again. I must say that I think you are wrong to be so very mysterious." And Mrs. Roberts made a movement, as if she were about to rise from the chair on which she had deposited herself.

“What is mamma going to do?” whispered Agatha to Mr. Montgomery. “The room is getting so full, that if she moves she will never get back to her place. What is it you have been saying to her?”

“I have been saying nothing, I assure you. I believe she has taken fright about those two ladies who are sitting without their bonnets at the top of the table. She is afraid that they are not respectable.”

“Mercy on me, what can it signify!” replied Agatha, knitting her brows with a look of great annoyance.

“Certainly nothing, my fair friend!” replied her elegant neighbour; “besides, I never in my life heard a syllable against their respectability. Do get your mother to sit still, will you?”

“Do you know any thing against them?” said Agatha, remarking, as her mother had done, something about the curling lips of Mr. Montgomery, which she could not quite understand.

“All I know,” he replied, raising his eyebrows with a look of weariness at the prolonged discussion, “all I know about them is, that the tallest is the Princess of D * * * *, and the other, who is

her sister-in-law, is married to the Crown Prince of P * * * *."

"Good heavens! Why did you not say so at first!" said Agatha, and then she bent across the table in her turn, and communicated the important intelligence in a whisper to her mother; then again turning to her neighbour, with a reproachful smile, she repeated, "Why did you not say so at first?"

"Good heavens! what did it signify?" he replied. "Which soup do you take? white or brown?"

The business of dining had now begun, and whatever the younger part of the company might think of it, Mrs. Roberts felt this to be one of those matters of which increasing years and improving wisdom ought to teach the real value; she therefore only gave one stare of rather incredulous wonder to the words of Agatha, and began to devote her most serious attention to the business of the hour.

Just about the moment when the soup had completed its round, Mr. Vincent entered the room, and paused for a moment within the doorway, to discover whereabouts the party might be

of whom he came in search, for he had learned at the Balcony House that the family were gone to dine at the ——. The first eye amidst the party which descried him, was Bertha Harrington's, and she immediately stood up, and made him a sign to approach, indicating that there was room near them. He promptly obeyed, and found that at the distance of two places from that of Bertha, there was a vacant chair. He gave her a desponding look, and appeared preparing himself to take it, when she turned to Edward Roberts, who was seated next to her, and said with equal promptitude and decision, "Be so good, Mr. Roberts, as to take that vacant chair. I wish to have my cousin, Mr. Harrington Vincent, seated next me."

It would not be easy, perhaps, to decide which of the two gentlemen was the most surprised by this unexpected command; and however much their feelings upon it might differ in other respects, there was one upon which they were in unison—namely, that under the circumstances, they had nothing to do but obey. A very few seconds sufficed to make Mr. Vincent forget his surprise, and feel nothing but pleasure at finding

himself in the place he had thus unexpectedly obtained; and anybody who had overheard the conversation of the two cousins, would have concluded that they had been brought up together in the greatest intimacy, and that they both considered themselves as belonging to each other, as much by necessity as by inclination. He told her how he had called at the Balcony House in the morning, and how dreadfully disappointed he had been at not finding her at home; and she told him that if he had only come half-an-hour before, she should have been *so* glad, for that then they might have walked together. And then she communicated all her hopes and wishes about exploring the secret passage between the two castles; and in short, amidst the whole of the gay throng assembled round that very festive board, among all the jestings and the flirtings which animated it from one end to the other, there was not one who was conscious of so cheering and delightful a harmony of spirits as the lately silent and sad Bertha Harrington. No longer feeling desolate and alone in the world, the presence of her "cousin William,"—of that dear, noble-spirited

son of an unhappy mother, whose name and whose idea were so familiar to her ear and to her heart—seemed to have converted her situation from one of almost unmixed suffering, into everything that was the reverse of it.

Edward Roberts meanwhile had found such effectual consolation from the conversation of the lady next whom his new position placed him, that he speedily forgot the affront he had received; and never for an instant mixing up his purpose of obtaining Bertha's hand and fortune with any observations he felt disposed to make upon her exceedingly disagreeable manners, he as usual soon forgot that anything so uncongenial was in existence, while he gave himself wholly up to the delight of falling in love with a new charmer. He had speedily the great satisfaction of discovering that his fair neighbour was a married woman, which circumstance had become, in his opinion, absolutely necessary to render a tender attachment worth forming; and it more than compensated in his eyes for the dozen or so of years by which she was his senior. What her country might be he could not very accurately decide, nor

did this signify a farthing, as on the one fact needful—namely, that she was not English—he could feel no doubt. Perhaps the fact of her speaking English fluently, though rather imperfectly at times, might contribute not a little to make her amiable familiarity of manner the more captivating to him; for notwithstanding his own firm conviction that he spoke French like a native, he was conscious that though quite easy it was very fatiguing. Whether it were that he felt a captivation in her broken English, which he thought might by imitation be added to his own attractions, or that it arose from the habit of imitation so often met with in persons of his order of intellect—whatever were the cause, he had not conversed with her ten minutes before his idiom became wonderfully assimilated to her own.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, looking at him with much kindness, “I perceive, dat is I mean I see, dat you not one English.”

“Alas,” sighed Edward in reply, and returning her flattering glance with one which seemed to deprecate her scorn when she should know the

truth, "alas! would, madam!—dat is, I should much great deal be thankful to de *bon Dieu* if I could say your *aimable soupçon* vas correct. But no! I am not so appy. Yes, I am English!"

There was a melancholy pathos in the tone with which he made this avowal, that must have touched any heart not absolutely made of stone; and his new acquaintance, who could not with justice be accused of any hardness in that region, replied with the most soothing gentleness, "*Mais n'importe donc!* Dose who do know to make demselves aimables, have a contri common to dem own selves superior to all de oders in de world!"

"Ah den!" exclaimed Edward in a fervent whisper, "no need I to ask vot contri boasts your birth. You are of de contri *des aimables!*"

Before the dialogue had reached this point, the young Lord Lynberry had caused the champagne to flow very abundantly amongst his party; and when, by his lordship's commands, the sparkling flask reached Edward, he transferred the tall glass that came with it, generously filled to the brim,

to the hand of his enchanting neighbour, contenting himself for the nonce with the tumbler that stood beside him. Most readers are probably aware that nothing tends to render the act of dining so gay as abundance of tolerably good champagne. The room was getting warm too, and the bright beverage had been so well *frappé* by the attentive waiter, bribed to the task an hour or two before by his thoughtful young lordship, that it was next to impossible to refuse the oft pledged draught ; and the consequence was that Mrs. Roberts—who really, poor woman ! did always suffer, as she said, more than any body from heat—had the fourth time made the foot of her glass point to the heavens before she recollected what she was about. But then she did, for she began to feel rather giddy, though, as she whispered to Mr. Roberts, she was not in the least uncomfortable ; only she thought she ought to have eaten rather a more solid dinner before she began, and the want of *that* made her head feel as light as a feather.

“ However,” she added, “ it is never too late to mend, they say, and if that is not as nice a

couple of ducks that they have been cutting up there as ever was bought in Leadenhall-market, I am a Dutchwoman. If I don't manage to get a limb or two of 'em for my share, say that I am a greater fool than you took me for."

The worthy Mr. Roberts, who had seen the last of the four glasses of champagne disposed of with some uneasiness, exerted himself to procure for his lady such a substantial portion of her favourite dish as might at least for some time keep her silently employed. Nor was he disappointed. Mrs. Roberts, altogether, never felt better in her life, and ate what her attentive husband set before her with great relish; but when she had concluded this part of the entertainment, she said to one of the waiters, rather louder perhaps than was necessary, "*Apportez une peu de eau de vie, mon bon homme. Je ne suis pas tout à fait bien.*"

"Gracious Heaven, ma'am!" exclaimed the greatly shocked Agatha, "what are you thinking of?"

"Thinking of, child? thinking of my stomach, to be sure! What do I care for all these people, compared to my own health? I promise you that

I will not make myself ill, for all the *parlez-vous* upon earth.”*

* This anecdote is correctly given from the life, and proceeds from one of the very numerous class who have contrived, in many places on the continent, to be considered as a fair specimen of an order of persons, among whom they assuredly would not be admitted at home, either as equals or associates, in any way.

CHAPTER IX.

THIS “*delightful dinner-party*,” at the — Hof, produced a considerable effect upon the position of the Roberts party at Baden-Baden. Amidst the class of persons, not a very small one (for all the civilised nations of the earth contribute more or less to compose it) who find themselves able, and hold themselves privileged, to devote their existence here below to the search for amusement, there may generally be found a considerable portion who, let them be of what nation they will, may perhaps be better described by one little English word than by any name, phrase, title, or epithet, which can be found else-

where. This unpretending little English word is
“FAST.”

To the initiated this word requires no explanation, being so pregnant with meaning as almost to defy any possible paraphrase to render it more expressive, more clear, more intelligible ; but for the sake of such readers as may chance to live too much in the shade for the light of such meteor-like phrases to reach them, I will endeavour to explain what it means. A fast man is one who is endowed with sufficient energy (or audacity) to do every thing that he thinks will amuse him, without permitting himself to be restrained by any consideration whatever. The advantages obtained by this sort of energetic character are somewhat analogous to what Shenstone declares to belong to the man who has contrived to obtain the character of an *oddity*. “It sets him in an easy chair for life,” says the pastoral poet, who, notwithstanding his pipe and his crook, knew how to listen to the “busy hum of men” as well as of bees. But the easy chair of the *fast* man is a much more luxurious sort of machine than that of the *oddity*; for whereas the sole hope and aim of the *oddity* is to be per-

mitted to sit in peace, without being pestered by any friendly inquiries as to *why* he does this, or *why* he does not do that, the cushioned ease of the fast man not only enables him to do and to say what he likes himself, but to insist with most powerful and mysterious authority, that all admitted to the honour of his intimacy should do so too ; that is to say, not what *they* like best, but what *he* likes best.

Moreover, for the most part, the oddity contents himself by being permitted to utter sundry queer notions, in quaint phrase ; or he may perhaps claim the privilege of being clothed in his own fashion, and not in that of his tailor. But far greater are the demands of the fast man upon the toleration of his friends. In all sincerity and truth he expects permission to transgress every law in the decalogue without incurring any worse penalty than being called "FAST." Yet this, in truth, instead of punishment, is the very greatest reward which it is in the power of his fellow-creatures to bestow upon him ; for he would greatly prefer knowing that it *was* bestowed, than be assured that all who knew of his existence agreed in proclaiming him the most

virtuous man alive. Yet *at home*, excepting to their papas, mammas, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, and cousins, this class is of no very great importance ; and even these close relatives, though often nearly worried to death perhaps by their superabundant vivacity, are generally disposed to pass a lenient judgment on their fooleries, and to let them off with observing that their “ Virtue hath a licence in it which seems a little fouler than it is.”

Should a wife, indeed, be in the case, the social relations of the parties are likely to be more painfully affected, for the *fast* husband is rather apt to keep the fancy dress with which he adorns his irregularities, for company, putting it off without ceremony on coming home to his wife, who is therefore forced, sometimes a good deal against her inclination, to contemplate him under a very much worse aspect than any other individual of his acquaintance. This is unfortunate ; yet still the fast class are, on their native soil, of little importance to us, compared to the injurious effect they produce on the reputation of their countrymen abroad. There is not a capital in Europe—to say nothing of spas, baths, wells, and so forth,

where a knot of these frolicking, rollicking Englishmen may not be found, not only doing pretty nearly everything that they ought not to do, but doing it with such audacity of display, as of necessity brings all eyes upon them ; while by thus thrusting themselves and their noisy impertinence perpetually on the foreground, they contrive very effectually to keep the better class of English travellers comparatively out of sight, leaving their own precious sayings and doings to be quoted by all the nations of the earth, as the moral and intellectual type of the British people.

This is a pity, and cannot fail to be much lamented by the patriotic English both at home and abroad ; for the class *is* perfectly well known at home, and the effect they produce when on their travels is guessed at without much difficulty. But although the class of men denominated *fast men* may be perfectly well known in England, and sufficiently studied without leaving it, there is another class sent forth by our overflowing population, which can only be seen in perfection abroad—namely, that awful portion of the travelling tribe, properly denominated “*fast ladies*.” Of this class the women of England

who remain at home have, I really hope and believe, no idea whatever : and were it not that these too, from the noisy audacity with which they bring themselves forward, are frequently pointed out as specimens of *English women of fashion*, it would be desirable to leave them in the shade in which their insignificance at home would naturally place them ; but as it is, it may be useful to raise a voice, however feeble, just to tell all whom it may concern, that the *fast young ladies* who are led about by their papas and mammas, from kingdom to kingdom, and from city to city, flirting and frolicking in a style peculiarly their own, and with such freedom from all ordinary young-lady-like restraints as entitles them to the said epithet of *fast*, are NOT SPECIMENS OF THE GENTLEMEN'S DAUGHTERS OF ENGLAND.

It may, perhaps, be thought that none whose good opinion is worth conciliating for my beautiful countrywomen can possibly require such an assurance ; but, unfortunately, those who try to make themselves the most conspicuous, are always the most observed ; and while hundreds of delicate young creatures, brought to the continent for

the purpose of completing their highly-finished and careful education, come and go as noiselessly and as quietly as spirits permitted to look out upon other worlds than their own—leaving no renown behind them save that of sharing their national boon of superior loveliness—half-a-dozen low-bred, bold-spirited young women, intoxicated by finding themselves admitted among persons of station greatly superior to their own, leave as they go a track as conspicuous, and not greatly more refined, than that of a steamboat; while thousands of eyes look after them, thousands of shoulders are shrugged, and the phrase, “Is not that perfectly English?” may be heard muttered in more languages than one.

We laugh at our French neighbours for the blunders they make with our titles; but the Sir Bulwer and the Sir Scott does greatly less discredit to their quickness, than the judgments which they pass so freely upon the deficiency of grace in English manners. Not only the French, however, but all the other nations of Europe, before they can justly appropriate to themselves the merit of discernment while passing this

judgment, must rouse their acuteness to the task of not mistaking a bad specimen for a good one.

This dissertation on fast gentlemen and ladies must, however, come to a close, or I shall get retaliated upon by the epithet of "*slow*." The delightful dinner-party at the — Hof produced, as I have said, a considerable effect upon the position of the Roberts family at Baden-Baden. The tones of their voices, except when indulging in the tender whisperings of flirtation, had been so loud, and their indignation at the vulgarity of the company in general, and at their contriving to live without salt-spoons in particular, expressed both in French and English with so much energy, that they had soon become by far the most conspicuous party in the room. In addition to this glory, of which they were fully conscious, they enjoyed, as we know, the unspeakable delight of having in Mr. Montgomery the handsomest and most fashionable man at the baths, and in Lord Lynberry the heir to the highest title. Can it be matter of wonder that this, together with as many glasses of champagne as could be well offered to young ladies, should have made them

very lively indeed? Lively they certainly were, and not only the young ladies, but the father, the mother, and the son also. In their different ways, they were all lively; and then and there it was, that for the first time a voice of sufficient authority to bestow a lasting denomination—namely, the voice of Mr. Montgomery himself, pronounced that “the Robertses were regular fast girls, just the right sort of thing to meet abroad, and to make Black-Forest larking, pleasant.”

The evening of this important day was passed partly at the rooms, and partly in the half-lighted drawing-room of the Balcony House. But, half-lighted as it was, Mrs. Roberts felt that it was an exceedingly good drawing-room, and could only be taken at a watering-place like Baden, by people of condition. As to its being only half-lighted, nobody seemed inclined to complain of that. There was a fine moon; both the French windows were opened upon the balcony which gave its name to the domain, and before the end of the evening there were two chairs put out at each window. It was Mr. Montgomery who did this, in his usual gay and lively manner, declaring that “it was a sin to the Lady Moon, not to consecrate their

pretty balcony to her as a sort of temple, where all the family might, in turn, repair to perform their orisons to her beauty."

Some of the family, however, appeared to think that this duty might be performed vicariously; for though Mrs. Roberts did step out for half a minute, and seat herself there, while she turned a broad smiling face of approbation upon Mr. Montgomery, the ceremony did not become general. Mr. Roberts, good man, had eaten a particularly hearty dinner; and this, together with his having taken about treble his usual quantity of wine, made him feel, as he told his wife in a whisper as soon as the tea-things disappeared, that he "could not keep out of his bed five minutes longer if he was to die for it." So he walked off, without thinking it necessary to describe his sensations to any one else.

Mr. Vincent, who had accompanied the party from the dinner-table to the rooms, and thence to the Balcony House, had wholly, and without any affectation of reserve on either side, assumed towards Bertha the manner of a near and privileged relation; and soon after the disappearance of Mr. Roberts, he whispered something in her

ear, to which she only replied by an inclination of the head. But if the whisper expressed his opinion that she would do well to follow her nominal guardian's example, she received it with very marked obedience, for in the next moment she rose from her chair, and lighting a little taper, which stood ready on a side-table, she glided out of the room, her only farewell being confined to a glance of the eye bestowed on her cousin as she passed.

Mr. Montgomery and Agatha at one window, and Maria and Lord Lynberry at the other, had already begun to offer their lunar orisons; but they had not yet taken possession of the chairs, and Mr. Vincent for a moment put himself *entiers* with his young pupil and the pensive fair one who stood sighing at his side.

"It is a beautiful night, Miss Roberts," said the tutor; "but are you not fearful of taking cold?"

"Cold!" reiterated Maria, in an accent which seemed in that one syllable to express both astonishment and scorn. "Cold! Oh, Heavens! no."

"I am going to the theatre, Lynberry," said

Mr. Vincent, without attempting any contest on the state of the atmosphere, and that of the young lady's shoulders, "will you come with me?"

"No, by Heaven, will I not!" replied the young man, with great energy.

"Well then, good night," said the tutor, and repeating the good night with the accompaniment of a bow to Maria, he stepped back into the room, shook hands with the well-pleased Mrs. Roberts, who thought his going the most fortunate thing in the world, and departed, Mr. Montgomery and Agatha being already too deep in their devotions, to permit his offering any farewell, without indiscretion.

Mrs. Roberts then settled herself in the most comfortable arm-chair the apartment contained, and drew towards her a book that lay upon the table, and which she placed in a proper position for being read, and then opened it. It chanced that the book was in German, being the property of Bertha, and left there by her the day before. But Mrs. Roberts's perusal of the volume went not so far as to make her aware of this, and it therefore answered her purpose quite as well as any other could have done. For a few delightful

moments, the happy and triumphant mother indulged herself by glancing first at one window and then at the other, inwardly soliloquizing upon her gratitude to Heaven for having given her sufficient strength of mind to persevere in doing all she had done.

“How long would it have been, I wonder,” thought she, “before I should have seen my girls talking in England with two such men as those! If nothing more *was* to come of it, nothing whatever, the advantage to them must be great and important. The very talking of Lord Lynberry in the manner that my dear darling Maria has now undoubtedly a right to do, would be enough to make her fortune among our own set at home. Not that my hopes stop there. Goodness forbid! I know how to manage a little better than that, I hope. Dear girl! I shall live to see—I hope and trust I shall—”

Mrs. Roberts was growing very sleepy; her eyes closed, and opened, and closed again. She did not intend to go to sleep—quite the contrary; but somehow or other, the last night’s ball, the excellent champagne, the easy chair, were altogether too much for her, and she did at

length fall fast asleep, her last waking thought easily ripening into a glorious dream, in which she not only saw Maria with a coronet on her brow, but two aunts of the noble bride, seven cousins, and one sour-faced old uncle, all looking as if they were falling into atrophy from envy as they looked at her.

CHAPTER X.

It is to be hoped that my readers feel sufficient interest in all the Roberts family to have remarked that Mr. Edward has not been mentioned as forming one of the party that went from the rooms to the Balcony House, for the purpose of taking tea, and passing the last hours of that delightful day. No. He went with them from the dinner-table to the rooms, but he did not go thence in their company.

Before making his parting bow to his fascinating neighbour at the dinner-table, he had learned from her that her husband was called Monsieur le Comte de Marquemont, that he was a man of VERY high

family in Normandy, that she had on this account been compelled by a tyrannical father to marry him at a frightfully early age, that she was herself the most unhappy of women, and that she was still a great deal younger than she looked, having pined for ten miserable years under that winter of the heart which must inevitably fall upon a warm-hearted young creature like herself under such circumstances. All this was uttered in a way to make Edward quite aware that the charming but unhappy Madame de Marquemont had already read something of gentle sympathy in his eyes, which had beguiled her into being more confidential in her disclosures than she had ever been in all her life before. And he answered to it all as he thought it became a young man of fashion and tender feelings to answer. She farther informed him that in the absence of every thing like domestic happiness, she sometimes sought a temporary relief from the amusing stimulation of *rouge-et-noir*.

“Of course,” she added, “I never play for any stake, the loss of which could give me a moment’s uneasiness. But even at small stakes, it really is a delicious amusement.”

"I can easily believe that," replied Edward, with vivacity. "I have never tried my luck yet, but I think I shall be tempted to do it some day."

"Let us try our luck together to-night!" exclaimed Madame de Marquemont, throwing a broadside of eye-beams upon him, which seemed to promise every species of success. He answered quite as she expected he would do, and the engagement was ratified by their gently knocking their glasses together before drinking the third glass of Lord Lynberry's champagne.

On leaving the table, however, the lady, with a gentle glance of almost tender rebuke, declined his offered arm.

"Sortez comme vous êtes entré, mon ami," she said, "et puis—on vous attends—au revoir!"

Thus schooled, Edward joined himself with his party as they made their exit, but he might really be excused for feeling, under the present circumstances, that he would rather have been elsewhere: for his father was taking care of his mother, his two sisters very evidently wished for nothing more than they already possessed in the way of escort; and as for his future wife, Miss Bertha Harrington, she who had hitherto appeared of so

shy and retiring a temper as to suggest the idea of an intellect too imbecile to permit her entering into conversation with any one, *she* was hanging on the arm of Mr. Vincent, with a degree of affectionate familiarity which made her look as if she decidedly belonged to him, chatting away, moreover, all the while, with a sort of happy eagerness, that seemed to show her foregone silence to have been any thing but natural to her.

The rest of the party, as thus grouped, were disposed of very much to Mr. Edward's satisfaction, but towards *this* couple he looked with a sort of sneer that was about half-and-half made up of ridicule and menace.

"Lynberry would do well to kick his hypocritical tutor down stairs," thought he; "and so I shall most assuredly tell him. And as for that detestable brat of a girl, who has no more idea how to conduct herself in well-bred society than an idiot, I will have her money, if I am obliged to lock her up for life afterwards. Nor do I care one single farthing what she does, or who she flirts with. My method with her will be a very summary one."

In short, Mr. Edward's exit from the banqueting-room formed rather a contrast to the very delightful two hours he had passed in it; but he in some degree relieved the painful condition of his temper, by indulging in that sort of elbowing himself through the crowd, which many Englishmen of his class have recourse to, when seized with a fit of ill-humour, accompanied by a sudden wish of proclaiming their national rights and high personal distinction.

This little cloud upon his felicity, however, soon passed away; for the interval between leaving the *table d'hôte*, and again beholding the fascinating woman who had made that table so delightful, did not last long. The majority of the happy idlers at Baden-Baden, generally permit themselves after dinner to enjoy the *al fresco* recreation to which the beauty of the scenery and the bright summer sun of Germany gives so much attraction, taking their coffee and ice at one of the little tables placed in the shade, yet so as to completely overlook the bright and sunny scene that spreads beyond. The Roberts ladies, and the gentlemen who were in attendance on them, had agreed that

the carriage should be dismissed, and that they should walk after dinner to the rooms.

“It is so pleasant to walk with an agreeable companion ! not all the carriages in the world can be half so delightful, in my opinion !” exclaimed Maria, when the subject was discussed ; and as every body seemed to agree with her, the walking was decided on, though Mrs. Roberts certainly did think it was rather a pity not to drive up in good style to the portico, when it was sure to be so very full. Walk, however, they did—four very well pleased pairs of ladies and gentlemen, while the carefully decorated, slight young figure of the well-favoured but frowning Edward sauntered onward alone. But his solitude and his sulkiness did not, as I have before observed, endure long. The party reached the portico, where the Miss Robertses had the delight of perceiving with a degree of certainty which left no room for doubt, that a multitude of eyes were turned upon them and their distinguished friends ; while the heart of their brother was once more awakened to pleasure as animated as their own, by seeing the very well-dressed little figure of the *piquante* Madame de Marquemont gracefully reclining on

a chair, with her tolerably pretty feet sustained by the bar of another, and her parasol in possession of a third. Her wigged and whiskered husband, who, as an experienced eye might easily perceive, belonged to a class of men as distinct from what we mean by *fast men* as a hawk from a pigeon, stood beside her with great politeness, but looking, nevertheless, as if he were rather anxiously waiting for an opportunity to take wing. Edward was at her other side in a moment.

“Give me leave, Mr. Roberts—” Edward had told her his name, and she had not forgotten it—“Give me leave, Mr. Roberts,” she said, “to present you to *mon mari, le Comte de Marquemont. Mon ami*, permit me to make you acquainted with my amiable young English acquaintance, Monsieur Roberts.”

“Fitzherbert Roberts,” said Edward, smiling and bowing with a vast deal of Parisian grace.

“*Enchanté, monsieur !*” replied the Comte. “The Fitzherbert is a known name—to *nous autres*—persons of condition—Sir Fitzherbert sounds like the name of a brother !”

The young Edward smiled, blushed, and bowed, pressed his hand upon his heart, and declared

himself “*bien fière, et bien touché*,” at hearing such a phrase from such lips.

“*Ah ça !*” exclaimed the Comte in reply, “*rien de plus à propos* than my making your acquaintance at this moment. Madame, though you would never guess it, is your countrywoman; but being of *haute naissance*, it was thought desirable to bring her up in France, where she has, in effect, acquired that last grace to which such a person as yourself, Sir Fitzherbert, cannot be insensible. But together with this Parisian charm, *ma bonne petite mignonne de femme* retains all the charming reserve of your island, and when, as at the present moment, I am under the *désolante nécessité* of leaving her, it is only to the care of a compatriot that I could venture to confide her. She is too reserved!—certainly too reserved. It is often a pain to me! She will make no acquaintance! Ah! she is so English at heart! But with you, Sir Fitzherbert, I have no scruple—your name is enough!” And with these words he bowed himself off, leaving our happy juvenile in possession of the lady, the three chairs, and the little round marble table that stood beside them.

Madame de Marquemont raised her eyes to his face with a very sweet, shy, melancholy smile, but before venturing to speak she breathed a gentle sigh.

“Why should you sigh, madame, at what makes me so supremely happy?” exclaimed Edward, with great animation. She smiled again, and for *toute réponse* removed her parasol from the chair it occupied. Edward obeyed the command thus bewitchingly conveyed; and a little altering the position of the chair, so as to bring himself pretty nearly face to face with his enchanting companion, he bent forward, and murmured with a vast deal of feeling a repetition of the question, “Why should you sigh?”

“Alas! *cher ami*,” she replied, “the heart of a woman is a strange mystery! Most surely I do not sigh for the absence of my husband, who, from the very hour at which, as a mere child, I took his name, has been an object of the most unmitigated aversion to me. Ah, no! It is not for his absence that I sigh, Fitzherbert!”

“Oh, wherefore then?” returned the young gentleman, causing his chair to take an angle of

ninety-five degrees in advance towards her, and thereby bringing his face very particularly near to hers.

“*Ah! de grace!*” she exclaimed, turning her head slightly on one side. “I trust wholly to your discretion. Let me find you worthy of it!”

“Angel!” he replied, in a very soft whisper, and looking at her with an air of admiration which proved that he uttered the epithet in all sincerity. She returned the look, and then both remained silent for a few seconds, during which the memory of Edward ran back to Paris, and to Madame de Soissonac, and the superiority of his present idol struck him forcibly. “Ah!” thought he, recalling the slight sketch which his new friend, Monsieur le Comte de Marquemont, had given of the birth and education of his fascinating wife, “ah! the real fact is, that a woman made by Heaven exactly to suit me, must be born in England, but bred in France.”

Scarcely had this short soliloquy passed across “his hurried thought,” than the silence was broken by Madame de Marquemont, who playfully extending her parasol to rouse him from his fit of abstraction by touching his arm, said, “*Cher*

ami! this will never do! for mercy's sake, order something, or we shall have every eye upon us, waiters included, who will be sure to tell us in a minute or two, that this dear little table is wanted—and then we shall have no longer an excuse for continuing to sit in this enchanting spot—*comprenez vous, mon ami?* ”

“What shall I order?” exclaimed Edward, starting as if just awakened from sleep. “Only tell me what you wish, and it shall be here in a moment!”

“Nay—I know not—*cela m'est égal*—coffee and ice, I think—*café noir, avec petit verre* first, you know—and then *glace à la vanille*.”

Edward struck upon the marble-table with a little key which he took from his pocket for the purpose; making assurance doubly sure, as he did so, that he had sundry broad silver pieces in the said pocket—a bit of good fortune which he owed, as usual, to the indulgence of his mother, who had listened to his declaration that he was absolutely without a decent pair of boots in the world, and had provided him that morning with the sum which he had told her was necessary for the purchase of this highly necessary commodity. Great,

certainly, was his comfort and satisfaction as his fingers noiselessly but firmly grasped the assurance that he had the power of gratifying the wishes of the charming Countess, without endangering the Fitzherbert fraternity which had been established between them, by having to tell the waiter in her hearing that he would call again.

Nothing could exceed the pretty graceful playfulness with which this charming woman permitted herself first to imbibe the contents of the *petit verre*, through the innocent medium of her cup of coffee, and then to take two ices, which she confessed was rather more than she liked so immediately after dinner, though later in the evening she often took two or three, because they so particularly agreed with her, but *now* she did it only because it afforded such a perfect excuse for sitting still, and talking.

And now, by gentle degrees, the twilight was fast sinking into darkness; and then, by degrees less gentle, the windows of the great saloon assumed a brilliance that, to many eyes, much more than rivalled that of the departed sun.

“What a delicious scene! is it not?” said Madame de Marquemont, suddenly rising, and pass-

ing her arm under that of Edward, who of course rose also.

“Delicious indeed!” he replied, tenderly pressing the arm which had been so frankly entrusted to him. “Shall we not wander away a little under those trees?” he added, “nobody will notice us! See! how many are doing the same thing!”

“Oh! Heavens, no!” replied the lady, “you know not what you propose! No, my friend, the only way in which we can enjoy each other’s conversation here is by appearing to *seek* the public eye instead of *shunning* it. The time may come, perhaps. It is just possible that, some day or other, the friendship with which Heaven seems to have inspired our hearts, may be permitted to gild some of the hours of melancholy solitude which I am doomed to pass in my own apartments. But for this we must watch long, perhaps! though I trust it may not always be in vain. But now, dear friend, let us enter the *salle de jeu*; every body there will be too much occupied by their own concerns to take any notice of us;—*allons!*” and so saying, she drew him towards the entrance.

Edward felt that he had indeed made acquaint-

ance with an angel, and that to oppose her gentle and benignant wishes in any way would be destroying a brighter perspective of future happiness and future fashion than had ever yet opened before him. In the midst of a multitude of tender and impassioned feelings, he remembered that his sweet companion was a countess, and he swore in his secret heart that nothing should interfere to check the progress of the invaluable friendship with which she was so evidently disposed to honour him. True it was, as he knew, alas! only too well, that from some unaccountable difficulty about getting ready money, which must of course arise from some abominably bad management on the part of his father, it was considerably more than likely that he should find himself embarrassed in the prosecution of this most flattering friendship, by the want of what it was utterly impossible that any young man of fashion could do without. Money he must have, and money he would have, or, instead of persevering in his good resolutions, and consenting to marry the detestable Bertha, he would make both father and mother understand that it was his immutable resolution to shoot himself before their eyes. These were great thoughts,

and might have taken a good while to ripen in an ordinary mind, but in that of Edward Roberts they had reached maturity within the short space of time which intervened between his quitting his chair beside the little marble table, and entering the brilliant saloon in the middle of which was placed a mightier table, around which at least a score of persons were already seated, whose hearts and souls were every instant becoming more and more tumultuously agitated by the vicissitudes of *rouge-et-noir*.

“Ah, *par exemple !*” exclaimed the countess, “you and I have engaged, you know, to try our luck together at the table ; now let me see how *habile* you are in obtaining two good seats for us. I will be close to you, *ami*. Get the chairs, and they shall not be lost by any awkwardness of mine ; *je m’y connais*.”

Trembling to his fingers’ ends under the influence of a variety of emotions, yet most prodigiously delighted in the midst of them, the obedient young man exerted himself as strenuously as if his life depended on his success, to find space at the table for the two chairs which he had seized upon ; and was rewarded by success, by the aid of

a trifling look or word of interference from the croupier, who probably saw something in the unmitigated eagerness of the young man's glance, which indicated such a state of mind as he desired to see in the guests that surrounded his master's table. The countess kept her promise, and was ready to drop, without embarrassment of any kind, into the seat thus ably prepared for her.

“*Eh bien !* How shall we start?” said she. “You shall choose the colour first. Let us begin *tout doucement*. Put down five francs for each of us on whichever colour you prefer.”

Edward, who was exerting all his powers of mind to their very utmost extent, in order to prevent himself from being totally overpowered by all the various agitations which assailed him, thrust his hand into his pocket and drew thence the two pieces, which he pushed forward as boldly as he could, upon the point nearest to him on which he perceived that money had been placed by others. It was done with a faltering hand, however, and the lady, who had already provided herself with a *rateau*, gave the coins a little push farther, saying, as she looked into the face of her companion with a bewitching smile, “*Soyez confiant, mon ami.*”

Edward attempted to return the smile, but did not succeed, for at that moment he was deep in meditation as to what he should do, and what he should say, if he should in a few minutes find himself without the power of depositing the stake his lovely friend might call for. He had still four five-franc pieces in his pocket, and that was all!

“*Gagné!*” exclaimed Madame de Marquemont, raking out with a pretty languid movement, intended to display her total indifference to the result, the four pieces which belonged to the partnership. The heart of Edward seemed to leap into his throat. Here was his stake doubled, and the horrible exposure upon which he had been meditating postponed for—perhaps for ever! With eyes sparkling with love and joy, the happy youth snatched up two of the pieces, and dropped them into his pocket, while with the other hand he pushed the remaining two towards the lady, saying, “Now it is your turn to choose.”

“*Mais non, mon ami, non.* You must push your success. But where are the other pieces! *Mon ami!* what are you thinking of? You must double the stake this time at the very least. Ah! I see you are a novice; but you shall be my

pupil, and you will soon understand the thing better."

Edward felt rather sick. He had thought himself safe for such a long time ! And now he might be plunged into all the misery he so deeply dreaded within the space of a moment. But there was no help for it, and once more struggling to render his hand respectably steady, he pushed four pieces to precisely the same spot on which he had deposited his first venture.

"The little *coup de rateau* from me must be added, I see," said Madame de Marquemont, "or the charm will not be complete, I suppose."

At that moment Edward could not speak. He had the wisdom not to attempt it, for he felt that he could not articulate a syllable ; but in the next, the enchanting voice of his fair friend murmured in his ear, "*Encore, cher Fitzherbert. Que tu sais bien choisir !*"

Too much agitated to appreciate the fascinating familiarity of the pronoun thus addressed to him, or even to see the tender smile with which it was accompanied, Edward only replied by exclaiming, "God bless my soul, how very lucky !"

If the charming Madame de Marquemont's

mental soliloquy at this moment consisted of the exclamation, "What an idiot!" it mattered little, for not only did the happy Edward hear it not, but his spirits were in such a state of exaltation that he would scarcely have cared for it if he had. It is not necessary to follow the interesting heir of the Roberts family through all the vicissitudes of that sometimes varying, but, on the whole, most happy evening. Now and then a few pieces were lost; but when they left the table for the purpose of repairing to the lodgings of the lady, where Edward was invited to sup on "lettuce and a glass of Rhine wine," the joint stock amounted to thirty pieces, which Madame de Marquemont divided between them in the prettiest and most playful manner imaginable. And who, in Edward's predicament, could have been so churlish as to remember that she forgot to reimburse him for her share of the original stake?

CHAPTER XI.

WILLIAM HARRINGTON VINCENT was as well-principled a young man as if he had had no worthless relations belonging to him ; and, although he was himself beginning to think Baden-Baden one of the most agreeable places he had ever visited, he was also beginning to think that it would be right and proper to leave it with as little delay as possible. This self-denying opinion, however, was not occasioned by any consciousness that he was falling in love with his little cousin Bertha, more seriously than the relative position of their respective fathers would render

wise or convenient; on the contrary, if he *was* falling in love with her, he was not conscious of it at all, being honestly persuaded in his heart that the deep interest he felt for her arose solely from the forsaken loneliness of her position, joined to the affectionate memory he retained of her mother. He was aware, indeed, that she was a lovely and intelligent young creature, and that there was something in the unrestrained and confiding frankness with which she seemed to throw herself upon his cousinly protection, which was touching and endearing in no common degree. But poor Vincent was not one of those spoilt children of fortune, who never see anything that they think pretty, and particularly worth having, without fancying they have a right to possess it. On the contrary, it was quite sufficient that any object should appear in his eyes particularly valuable, in order to make him feel at once that he had nothing to do with it. The well-conducted son of a selfish, dissolute father is ever considered, and very naturally, as a being entitled to the pity and commiseration of the whole world; and yet the fact is by no means of unfrequent occurrence, that a son so situated finds in his

misfortune the seeds of higher qualities, and more self-denying strength of mind, than would ever have taken root in his character under other circumstances. And so it was with the acreless heir of Everton Park. Forgetfulness of himself and his own individual interests had been taught him in a multitude of ways, among which the example received from his mother, and the warning received from his father, were about equally efficacious. He was quite aware, as I have said, that his cousin Bertha was a very fascinating as well as a very estimable little personage; but he was quite aware also that her fortune would be such as to entitle her to marry in a way to place her in a station exceedingly different from that of the wife of the son of a ruined gamester. True it was that, although only a first cousin, once removed, he stood starred in the baronetage as heir to the title and large entailed estates of Bertha's father. But that father was still almost a young man; he was now a widower, and had given both his father and himself quite sufficient indications of his hostile feelings towards them, to make it scarcely a matter of doubt that he would

marry again as speedily as possible, if only in the hope of obtaining an heir less distasteful to him. The idea of gaining the affections of his young cousin had, therefore, only entered his head as a thing most scrupulously and cautiously to be avoided. He was by no means insensible to the fact that she disliked the people she was with, to a degree which might almost perhaps have placed her in Dr. Johnson's honoured category of a good hater ; and he attributed, very justly, a considerable portion of the pleasure she so evidently took in his society, and the strong measures she adopted to make it evident that she considered him as her natural protector, as the result of it. And thus, feeling an honest confidence in himself, and a most sincere conviction that the friendship so pleasantly springing up between them could bring no danger of any kind to her, he permitted himself with a safe conscience to enjoy it: and enjoy it he certainly did, to a degree that made his suddenly determining to quit Baden an act of great self-denial.

But there was something in the style and manner in which Lord Lynberry and Miss Maria

Roberts treated each other, which began very seriously to alarm him. His young pupil had many good qualities, but he was hot-headed and impetuous; and his vehement admiration for beauty was so little concealed, that his tutor might have been living, during the seven or eight months they had been together, in a state of constant alarm from the expectation of his eloping with some fair one or other, had not the *constant inconstancy* of his youthful lordship re-assured him, and converted his reiterated confessions and protestations of everlasting attachment into a source of more amusement than anxiety. But Vincent had never seen his young friend entangled before in such a web as that which the tender Maria appeared to have thrown over him; and he was the more startled by the effect it seemed to have produced, from the circumstance of his having really believed that, in the case of Bertha Harrington, an impression had been made on the heart of Lord Lynberry of a much more serious kind than any which had preceded it. In this belief he was, perhaps, partly right, and partly influenced by the consciousness that, in the case of Bertha, there was at least *de quoi faire* a last-

ing impression. But not only had this seemingly serious love fit been suddenly and totally effaced, but it had been succeeded by such unprecedented marks of passionate devotion to this new charmer on the part of the young man, and such undisguised warmth of reciprocal tenderness on that of the lady, that Mr. Vincent knew not what to think of it, yet felt that he should have no great right to be surprised if, at any moment of the day or night, he were to hear that his young charge had, by the aid of a team of post-horses, set off with Miss Maria Roberts for the nearest spot where it would be possible for them to unite their fortunes for life. This was a consummation so very devoutly to be deprecated, that poor Vincent, with his habitual abnegation of all selfish feelings, determined upon announcing to Lord Lynberry his intention of immediately proceeding to Rome, between which city and Naples it was the wish of Lord Southtown that his son should divide the ensuing winter.

The time that the really anxious young tutor had fixed upon for communicating the resolution he had taken was the hour of breakfast, at the interval of five days from the eventful ball at which

the fickle lordling had made the transfer of his heart from Miss Bertha Harrington to Miss Maria Roberts. Vincent, as usual, was the first in the breakfast-room, but Lord Lynberry came whistling into it not long after him ; and, as the tutor contemplated his very youthful aspect, he trembled to think how great a degree of responsibility must inevitably attach to himself, both in the eyes of the parent and of the world in general, if he permitted him to return to his native country as the husband of the fair but *fast* Maria.

“ Well, my dear Lynberry,” began the tutor, when the coffee and eggs had been handed about between them for a few minutes, “ well ! do you not think that we have almost had enough of Baden-Baden ? ”

“ Thou art mad to say so ! ” returned the young man, in high tragedy tone. “ Enough of Baden ? Enough of my lovely, my adored Maria ? Vincent ! thou must know me for a man of very patient mood, or thou wouldst not tempt my choler so desperately—no, not for thy life.”

“ Good faith, my lord, I have no intention of tempting your choler at all,” replied Vincent, laughing, “ but you know, I believe, that I act

under orders, and if I have blundered not in the reading of them, it is about time for us to turn our faces towards Italy."

"Willingly, *mon cher*, provided always that my face at least, let it be turned which way it will, shall be so placed as to enable me to glue my eyes upon the idol of my affections."

Vincent looked grave, and remained silent, not very well knowing whether it would be most wise or least so, to lead the impetuous young gentleman to explain himself so clearly as to permit of a serious remonstrance in return. While thus absorbed in reverie, the anxious tutor kept his eyes fixed upon his coffee-cup; had he looked up and encountered the glance of his pupil, he would have seen an expression in it that would have puzzled him. The glance was both scrutinising and comic, and as far removed as possible from what Vincent would have expected to meet, had he taken courage to look at him.

"Well, Vincent!" exclaimed Lord Lynberry at length, "what are you thinking about?"

"I am thinking, my lord, that I have a painful duty to perform; but that, painful or not, I must and will perform it to the best of my judgment

and power. Confess, my lord, that you already understand what I mean, and that your conscience tells you in what direction my duty lies."

"My conscience, Mr. Vincent?" replied Lord Lynberry, with rather more gravity than was usual to him, "I doubt a little, my dear sir, whether at this moment it be not your conscience rather than mine, which, if properly awakened, might assist most effectually in enabling us to understand each other."

"As how, Lord Lynberry?" said the tutor.

"As thus, Mr. Vincent," replied the pupil. "My perspicuity, though not my conscience, leads me to divine, that the sort of lecture you appear to have been preparing for me relates to my devoted attentions offered at the shrine of the transcendent Miss Maria Roberts. Is it not so, sir?"

"And if it be, my lord?" returned Vincent, looking at him with some degree of surprise.

"Why then if it be, Mr. Vincent, your conscience ought to tell you that you have done your pupil and your friend less than justice in supposing that your assistance was wanting to save him from being entangled for life in the chains of

such a charmer as Miss Maria. Out upon you, Vincent! I give you cause enough, and free permission to boot, to accuse me of a thousand jackanape tricks, that do but small credit to my wisdom; but I know not, Vincent, what thought or feeling ever escaped from me in my graver moments, which can justify you in suspecting that I want your assistance to save me from the peril of becoming Miss Maria Roberts's husband."

This was spoken with feeling as well as gravity, and Mr. Vincent instantly felt that he deserved the rebuke, and as instantly acknowledged it.

"Forgive me, my dear Lynberry," he said, "forgive the injustice I have done to your taste, in favour of the deep anxiety I feel for your happiness. Had I not been your tutor, and had I not had my fears awakened to a sort of morbid sensibility by the responsibility attached to the situation, I do not believe that I ever should have suspected you of falling seriously in love with Miss Maria Roberts. And yet, Lynberry, though my tender concern for your matrimonial projects in this instance may have been somewhat supererogatory, do you not think I should do right to lecture you a little on the sinfulness of the false hopes to which

you are giving birth in the bosom of the young lady?"

"Do so by all means, my dear Mr. Tutor, if you believe yourself called to the task by the voice of duty; but you must excuse me, if, while I listen to you—which of course I shall do with all possible respect—you must excuse me, I say, if I congratulate myself a little upon my own superior knowledge of the human heart; for I presume, when you talk of Miss Maria's hopes, you mean her tender hopes of having her fond affection for me returned, and not of her ambitious hopes of coaxing me into putting my honoured mother's coronet upon her head?"

Vincent gazed at his young pupil with very considerable satisfaction as he said this, but with considerable surprise also, and then laughingly exclaimed,—

"Oh excellent young man!

How much more older art thou than thy looks!'

You have relieved me from an immense load, Lynberry, both present and future. I shall not easily again take fright about you; and as to the fast young ladies, as Montgomery calls them, I

believe that I must be contented to let them take care of themselves."

"Which they will do according to the fashion of their tribe, very assiduously assuming the credit of having enslaved a viscount, if they gain nothing else. Set your heart at rest, good Vincent, and let them labour in their vocation, as it is their nature to do. They would have to thank you for small mercies if you took them out of it. But now tell me, Vincent, as frankly as I have now exposed to you the real state of my feelings towards the incomparable Maria, tell me frankly, if you think that all the enthusiastic admiration I avowed to you for Miss Harrington was of the same fashion and fabric as that inspired by Miss Maria?"

Lord Lynberry coloured as he asked the question, and Mr. Vincent coloured as he answered it.

"You must be perfectly aware, my lord, that I cannot think so," he said, "for that if I did—" and here the tutor stopped.

"You would blow my brains out, you would say," rejoined Lord Lynberry, "and it would be more obviously your duty, I think, than Quixot-

izing in the cause of the fair Roberts. But I am strongly tempted, Vincent, tutor as you are, to lecture you a little in my turn, and you ought to pay the more attention to my preaching, because it is not, as you will perceive from the nature of it, the result of jealousy. And first I will tell you, as an offering to your cousinly feelings, that, amidst all the band of adorables before whom my susceptible heart has bowed, Miss Harrington is the only one to whom I should never have taken the liberty of making love, without hoping, as the old ladies say, that something might come of it. But I had just sense enough to perceive in the course of a very few hours, that I might just as well fall in love with the moon; so I judiciously said to my heart, '*halte la,*' and obedient to command, from being perhaps so very completely hopeless, the said heart did halt, and, having taken one long breath, wheeled about, and then set off to engage in a mock fight in rather a different direction. The scheme has answered perfectly; and I am now not only quite convalescent myself, but in a condition to bestow some little care and attention on the safety and welfare of my fellow-creatures; and you, Mr. William Harring-

ton Vincent, are the first to whom I feel disposed to address a little advice. My reverence for you is so great, generated of course by our relative positions, that I am quite ready to believe you totally and altogether above the contemptible weakness of falling in love yourself; but, notwithstanding your advanced age, Sir Tutor, I do suspect that your young cousin, so utterly insensible to the adoration I was so perfectly ready to offer her, is falling, or rather *has* fallen, over head and ears in love with you—who have perhaps never offered her any adoration at all; and if this be so, there may be good and sufficient reasons for our leaving Baden, Vincent, without reckoning any peril from the risk of my marrying the enchanting Roberts.”

“That you have formed a tolerably just estimate of the state of Miss Maria Roberts’s heart, Lynberry, is very likely, I think,” replied Vincent, in a tone of very particular calmness, “but you must excuse me if I venture to doubt your power of reading all other young ladies’ hearts as accurately as you have done hers. The character of my young cousin, for instance, is one that I confess I think it would by no means be easy to

read; and had I not thought so before, the complete blunder you have made respecting the nature of her feelings for me might convince me of it. Believe me, my dear Lynberry, the only interest I have in her eyes is that of a relation and natural protector, the want of which she feels, I am sorry to say, with most painful acuteness. You must perceive, by my manner, that I not only take the observation you have made in good part, but that, unfounded and blundering as it is, I give you perfect credit for sincerity and friendly feeling in making it; and on your part you will, I am sure, give me equal credit for sincerity when I assure you that you have been wholly mistaken. So now, I think, we may both stay at Baden as long as we like, having by our mutual openness convinced each other that there can be no danger for any one in our doing so."

"So be it," said Lord Lynberry, rising. "I like the place prodigiously, and could almost be tempted to quote Shakspeare—dear, old-fashioned fellow!—and exclaim

' Accursed be he who first says Hold! Enough!

The two young men then parted, very tolerably

well satisfied with each other, and each enjoying the comfortable persuasion that he might go on in the pleasant path he was in, without any fear that it would lead him wrong.

CHAPTER XII.

AND the elegant Montgomery—was his devotion to the captivating Miss Agatha of the same nature as that of his younger friend for the captivating Miss Maria? The following extract from a letter which he put into the Baden-Baden post about this time, addressed to a certain Lady Charlotte Polfston, may answer the question satisfactorily.

“You are unjust, dear Charlotte; I have acknowledged and submitted to the necessity of delaying our marriage till you are of age, as mildly and meekly as you could do yourself; and I sup-

pose you did not expect that I should listen to the perfectly unexpected reasonings which induced us to do so, by any particularly rapturous form of thanksgiving—did you? The only syllable like complaint which I have uttered, since the lawyers, with such devilish perspicuity, pointed out the reasons for this delay, was when your aunt, with so much exemplary and unshrinking candour, obligingly informed me that she particularly wished me to go abroad during the odious ten months that I am to wait for you, like a second Jacob. I believe I did then burst forth a little; yet here I am, not so much, as you know well enough, to please your rich aunt, as to comply with the fastidious delicacy of her *exigeante* niece. Yet now you have actually the ingratitude to reproach me, because, forsooth, you perceive by my letters that I should like better to return to England than go on to Rome.

“Yes, Charlotte, you are unjust, and, as a proof of this, I beg to assure you that at the very time I received your letter, I was as busily engaged as a man could well be in making love. It is perfectly true, Lady Charlotte; and, though possibly I may think that you deserve to be

made a little jealous, as a punishment for your severity to me, I give you my honour that I am not led to make this disclosure from any wish to inflict this painful emotion upon you, but solely to prove to you the perfect openness and sincerity of my character. I wish to Heaven you were here to see her and to see me. I do not say this because I want to see you; no, really, I do not mean that. I think it and say it because I would give the price of a little Watteau for the pleasure of seeing her sketched into your book of 'historical reminiscences.'

"She is a very pretty-looking girl, I assure you, this is perfectly true; but this, I fairly confess, is in my eyes her least attraction. No! it is her elegance, her grace, her fashion, which have rendered her irresistible in my eyes. Where she was born and bred, I know not exactly—somewhere in or about London, I believe; but to witness the effect of the perfect conviction which has come upon her, that her having crossed the Channel has levelled every species of inequality between her citizen-race and the aristocracy of Europe in general and England in particular, is, without any exception, the highest comedy in real

life that I have ever yet had the good fortune to look upon. As to my *not* making love to her, Charlotte, it would be as impossible as the not inhaling air when in the act of breathing. I do make love to her, Lady Charlotte; and let my sincerity in avowing the sin atone for its commission. Do not fancy, however, that the sweet creature's peace of mind is likely to be endangered by my tender attentions; be very sure that no such danger exists. My engagement to you is as notorious as the papers can make it, and there are many here who know how I am situated as well as I do myself. However, I have not trusted to this, but have delicately hinted to this charming specimen of poor England's travelling aristocracy, that, sensible as I had unfortunately become of her superior attractions, I was unhappily bound by an engagement which prevented my laying myself at her feet. And how do you think the darling answered me? By sorrow and despair?—by dignity and repulsion?—by reproaches and contempt? Nothing like it, my dear friend. Her reply, as nearly as I can remember it, was in these words.

“ ‘ I well know, Mr. Montgomery, that, among

persons in our class of life, the heart cannot always be listened to in affairs of marriage; but let us thank Heaven that, on the continent at least, there is an emancipation of sentiment, which in a great degree neutralises the misery produced by enforced ties. The pleasures of travelling are great, doubtless, to persons of refined taste; but its *uses* are greater still, for it enables them to throw aside the absurd prejudices of insular education, and to feel that the higher classes of society ought to be in a very great measure released from them.'

"There, my Lady Charlotte, is a specimen of the diffusion of useful knowledge, obtained by *les demoiselles ambulantes de la Grande Bretagne*; but build not any false theories upon this. I most assuredly hope to take you abroad with me next year, but no part of this species of new light is at all likely to reach you. You are not to suppose, however, that I ascribe my mystical power to your rank, or mine either, as a shield against the easy morality of the Continent—I have no such stuff in my thoughts, I assure you. But there is a species of folly, which really, in some cases, almost seems to amount to madness,

and from which you would be exempt—I mean that which arises from the intoxication experienced by travelling ladies and gentlemen, in stations somewhat below the middle class, on suddenly finding themselves associated with persons of superior rank. It really seems as if the adoration of title in our country (where alone, as distinct from *race*, it is revered) generated a positive disease of the moral system. The incredible, the inconceivable tricks played on the continent of Europe by the persons (frequently bankrupt tradesmen or merchants), whose finances do not permit their living with ease at home, are such as can scarcely be accounted for without supposing that monomania has something to do with it. I have seen such people shun all association with travelling families of private station (however well educated, and perfectly respectable in every way, and really holding a position in society at home very many degrees superior to their own) with the most scrupulous and careful avoidance, while their efforts to get introduced to both women and men, however infamous, who have titles, have something of feverish eagerness, which it is at once ludicrous and melancholy to

behold. And thus you see, sweet friend, that in spite of the little comedy with which I am amusing myself, I moralise the subject very seriously; but, if you think it would induce your aunt to arrive at the conclusion that I had better return to England, I will give you leave to paint my flirtation in any colours you please."

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Mr. Montgomery's statement, as given above, of what had passed between himself and Agatha, was perfectly correct, and most perfectly true; as also, was his observation that there was something exceedingly like madness in the state of mind of that enthusiastic young lady. Certain it is, however, that, till her arrival at Baden, the FINE phrensy which had taken possession of her was not without the very usual symptom, common to young ladies of her class, of fancying that every single man who spoke to them *might* be converted, with proper skill and good management, into that necessary, or at any rate very convenient commodity called a husband; and such was assuredly her first thought when making the acquaintance of Mr. Montgomery. But Lord Lynberry told her sister that his handsome friend was engaged

to be married to a lady in England ; and, though the report was a shock to her, it came accompanied with such confirmation of his being a man of fashion—for Lord Lynberry had mentioned the rank of the lady—that her wish for his acquaintance was rather increased than diminished by it. Some hope, some slight, vague hope there might be, perhaps, that her charms might detach him from the noble lady to whom he was affianced ; but such hope, if it existed at all, was so greatly less important to her than the dearer and more present one of having her name united with his, as that of the lady he most admired at the baths, that, as the latter grew and prospered, the former dwindled and died away—partly under the influence of the avowal he himself made to her, but still more under that of the powerful feeling, that she cared not a farthing whose husband he might be in years to come, provided that, at the present moment, she had the glory of leading him captive before the eyes of all the fair and noble ladies and all the “first rate fashionable” gentlemen assembled at Baden. This was a great step in the young lady’s progress towards deserving the epithet of “*fast*.” In order, however, fully to

comprehend the sort of set of which Miss Roberts is a type, it is necessary to premise that she was by no means one of that unhappily large class of females who are likely to become the victims of their own too tender hearts. Miss Agatha Roberts was as little likely to arrive at such a catastrophe as any young lady could be who, among her other bulwarks of protection, had *not* that of principle. But, notwithstanding this deficiency, a great many things were more likely to happen to Miss Agatha than that she should be destroyed by the vehemence of her affections; yet next to the pleasure of seeing in all the eyes—around her that the marked attentions of Mr. Montgomery were observed, was that of believing that she had succeeded in persuading him that of all mankind she loved and could love but him alone.

That she deceived herself in thus believing, is most true; but not the less for that did she enjoy the gratification of fancying, that let who would, in future years, fill the domestic English situation of mistress of his house, she, in the delightful present, filled that of mistress of his heart—a persuasion which gratified her in a thousand ways.

Nevertheless, even this gratification was nothing in comparison of that arising from the conviction that all the noble eyes, both male and female, which constituted the bright congress of Baden-Baden, took cognizance of the all-important fact, that the most elegant man in the society made her the object of his most particular attentions. If ruin of any kind threatened her, *this* was the source of it ; not any weakness of the heart ; and, although the conduct of the lively, thoughtless Montgomery towards her was any thing but defensible, its turpitude was of a very different order from that of a man exerting all the powers of pleasing bestowed upon him by Heaven, for the purpose of amusing himself during a moment, by rendering wretched for life a creature whose worst fault, perhaps, was the loving him better than herself. Of this, or of any thing in the least degree approaching it, Mr. Montgomery was not guilty ; yet he was one of a class who have a good deal to answer for, too ; for he was an English gentleman, and one well calculated in many respects to do that justice to his greatly misunderstood country, of which it so greatly stands in need. He, as well as many others belonging to

the same class of society, might, if it so pleased them, redeem throughout the Continent, in a very great degree, the national disgrace which now rests upon England, of being *the worst-mannered nation in Europe*. Young men travel more than old ones; and the young men who come forth from among us are greatly too apt to carry with them the holiday feelings of boys escaped from control, and go frolicking over the world without remembering for a moment that they are undergoing the ordeal of a very strict observation, and obtaining a European reputation, both for themselves and their country, which is for the most part far from being favourable, and for the most part far from being deserved. That more highly finished gentlemen can be found in any part of the world than in England, is an opinion which none can entertain who have had fair opportunities for forming a judgment on the subject; but as, from possessing both the power and the inclination for travelling greatly beyond that of any other people, the opportunities for forming this judgment arise, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, not in England but out of it, does it not become a positive patriotic duty in the young men who go forth to

sun themselves, and to be seen as well as to see—does it not behove them, each and all of them, to act a little more up to their own idea of what an English gentleman ought to be, than it is their usual travelling custom to do? Every Englishman may in this way prove himself a patriot. We do not want any Quintus-Curtius doings, in these piping days of ours, but it might be as well that we should not yield ourselves up to this imputation, of being the worst-mannered nation in Europe, merely for the sake of indulging the naughty-school-boy feeling that we may do what we will when we go out to play, because there is nobody by to punish us.

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Maria's case was a different one. She really was a pretty girl; and believing herself a great deal prettier, and feeling convinced that a series of lucky accidents had placed her quite in the very highest ranks of society, she determined to profit by these great advantages, and make a splendid match. Though she did not exactly perceive all that passed in the mind of the young Lord Lynberry, she had become quite aware that he liked to be made love to. It was to this pecu-

liarity in his lordship's temperament that she owed her triumph over Bertha Harrington; and it was in consequence of feeling assured of this fact, that she fell immediately a thousand fathoms deep in love with Lord Lynberry; and, had a keener wit than Lord Lynberry's been at work to watch her, a great deal of very fair amusement might have been elicited by noting all the little trickeries with which she played her part. She had her gay fits and her pensive fits, each so well calculated to set off the other! and if his lordship, by accident, chanced to express any thing approaching an opinion, did not her whole being, heart, intellect, and soul imbibe it? Did it not pervade every feeling and purpose of her existence? Did a flower receive a passing word of praise from his beloved voice, was there any other flower under the wide vault of heaven which she could care to cherish in her bosom, or adorn her flowing locks withal? His lordship preferred green tea. She knew not how it was, but somehow or other she had begun to find out, that if there was in the world something that she hated worse than every thing else, it was black tea. In short, it was not her fault if in him she did not live and move and

have her being. A good deal of this escaped his light-hearted lordship's notice, but he saw enough to amuse him exceedingly; and if at last he did feel a little piqued at the suspicion that the young lady was thinking more of his coronet than of him, and feel a little disposed to try his powers of being personally fascinating, there was a good deal in the conduct both of mother and daughter to excuse him.—And thus things went on for another month or so, the Roberts family decidedly becoming more obnoxious to observation every day, and, in their own estimation at least, more celebrated for their *bon ton*, high fashion, and unquestionable superiority, in every thing desirable, to everybody else in the place. There were a few Russian ladies, with magnificent diamonds and prodigiously high titles, with whom they became quite intimate, and in whose charming society, and that of an equal number of their highly distinguished military friends, they enjoyed many very delightful excursions, Mr. Montgomery and Lord Lynberry never failing to join them. On some of these occasions the high-born and highly-married Princess of Fuskymuskoff, a beauty of some years standing, and not wholly unknown at any con-

tinental court, very graciously consented to enact the part of *chaperone* to the whole party, poor Mrs. Roberts not being able conveniently to ride a donkey, and not wishing to walk as far as some of their pic-nickings carried them. In a few other instances they had made acquaintance with ladies who, like themselves, were in the habit of frequenting the rooms and the public walks; but by degrees these, most of them being *slow* English, were dropped again. Two young ladies indeed had, with their respective brothers, the honour of being admitted to a considerable degree of intimacy with our distinguished friends; but it is probable that they owed their distinction to their having learned to smoke—an accomplishment which they had not only promised to teach their new friends, but they and their respective brothers taught also the art of manufacturing exquisitely elegant little cigarettes, in a style that was perfectly fascinating to all parties.

One trifling uneasiness presented itself during these halcyon days to the mind of Mrs. Roberts, which arose from perceiving that her intended daughter-in-law not only avoided, habitually, and as a matter of established custom, every sort of

intercourse with her intended husband, but that moreover her intimacy with Mr. Vincent went on increasing in so very remarkable a manner, that she could not help thinking it *might* come to something, notwithstanding Edward's assurances that he did not care a sixpence for it, and that he perfectly well knew how to make Bertha Harrington his wife, let Mr. Vincent like it or not. It was a comfort, certainly, to hear him say this; nevertheless, as it did not quite satisfy her, she determined to speak to Bertha herself; not indeed on the subject of Edward—she did not think it was quite time for that—but on the subject of Mr. Vincent, whose familiar manner of talking and walking with her might be truly stated as having occasioned considerable anxiety to the young lady's self-constituted guardian. To this remonstrance Bertha listened without the least appearance of impatience, and even waited, when Mrs. Roberts had ceased speaking, to see if she had any more to say before she answered her; and when that lady added, "Well, my dear, what have you got to say to me about it?" she replied, "Very little, madam. Indeed, I doubt if it would not be better to say nothing."

“ No, pray, my dear, don't say that !” returned Mrs. Roberts, rather reprovigly. “ Young people, you know, should always speak when they are spoken to ; it is one of the very first rules that are taught. I am sure you must remember it, my dear.”

“ Then I will say, madam, that being, from unfortunate circumstances, placed at a distance from my nearest natural protectors, I profit with great thankfulness of the accidental presence of one who is sufficiently near to me in blood to make his friendship as valuable as it is agreeable.”

“ Well, my dear, I suppose it is all very natural that you should think so ; but it don't follow, you know, that those who are older and wiser should think just exactly the same,” said Mrs. Roberts, assuming a good deal of dignity in her voice and manner ; “ and I hope you will please to remember who it is who is speaking to you, when I say that in *my* opinion it would be much more proper if you did not walk and talk quite so freely with this Mr. Vincent, who, after all, is but a tutor, you know, if he was twenty times your cousin.”

“ So well, Mrs. Roberts, do I remember who it is that speaks to me,” replied the young lady, “ and how perfectly unauthorized is every word which you have taken the liberty to say, that, unless I receive your promise never again to intrude any observations upon an intimacy, the cause and origin of which must of necessity be totally unknown to you—unless I receive this promise, madam, I shall immediately profit by the intimacy you have observed, for the purpose of obtaining advice from the only quarter whence I can at present seek it, as to the best manner of quitting a situation which has become disagreeable to me.”

“ My darling child ! what can you be thinking of ?” exclaimed Mrs. Roberts, becoming exceedingly red. “ As if you did not know, my dearest Bertha, that the slightest word from you was always enough to make me do everything you wish ! And besides, I have that perfect confidence in you, my dear girl, that your merely saying, as you seem to do now, that there are good and proper reasons for your being so intimate with your cousin, would be quite enough to prevent my saying any thing more to prevent it—to

say nothing of my fondness for you, which of itself would be quite enough to prevent my ever alluding a second time to any thing that gave you pain."

Miss Harrington bowed rather stiffly in return to this affectionate speech, and walked out of the room.

Nevertheless, though she had so unexpectedly found a near and dear friend in her cousin, and though a mind of more than common courage enabled her to protect herself, in some degree, from the assumed guardianship of the unsuitable associates among whom she had been thrown, notwithstanding all this, her situation was, in truth, most pitiable. Her deep dislike to every individual of the family of which she had so strangely become a member, seemed to increase with every hour that was added to the length of their acquaintance ; for towards Mr. Roberts, though less detestably absurd than the rest of the family, she could feel no esteem. The weakness with which he yielded in all things to the ill-disguised tyranny of wife, daughters, and son, was, in her opinion, too degrading even to excite pity—contempt was the gentlest feeling she had to bestow upon him ; and towards the rest of the

family her feelings of dislike were stronger still. And yet, though she kept them in some sort of awe of her, by their sordid fears of losing the money she brought, she was far, oh ! very far from feeling that it was possible for her to leave them. There were circumstances connected with her terrible departure from her home, which she never had hinted, nor ever could hint to her cousin, though in all else there was not a thought of her heart that she wished to conceal from him. And these same circumstances, creating as they did a horrible though vague suspicion against her father, made her feel it more possible to endure for ever the detestable association of the Roberts family, than apply to him for leave to return home ; for that home, which had once been to her the very perfect model of all that home should be, was now become to her imagination the abode of all the horrors that could most appal her heart. But not a word, not a sigh, not a look, which might indicate this, must ever reach any human being, and least of all her cousin ! Alas ! there were causes enough of family estrangement between them already. Should she add another that might lead, if possible, to still

more dreadful scenes than all which had gone before ? Not for her life ! no, not if her life could have been forfeited a thousand times over to prevent it. In short, the situation of poor Bertha was very sad ; and though a buoyant, ardent spirit, elastic in youth, and stimulated by an imagination of no common strength and vivacity, did occasionally bring her moments, and even hours, perhaps, of enjoyment, there were many more during which a melancholy reaction fell upon her, and then it would not have been easy to find an innocent young creature of seventeen more profoundly unhappy.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOWARDS the close of this first delightful month at Baden-Baden, poor Mrs. Roberts found her admirable talents for managing the financial concerns of her family rather severely called upon in many ways. In the first place, the eloquent and unanswerable reasonings of her son and daughters—the power of which upon her mind seemed daily to increase—had proved to her, beyond the power of contradiction, that not only all their pleasure for the present, but the greatest portion of their happiness and prosperity during their future lives, depended upon their dining at the *table d'hôte* with the favourite *fast* party, to which

they now appeared to belong by prescriptive right, four days out of every week. Now this, although Lord Lynberry, Mr. Montgomery, and the two noble friends of the Russian princesses, invariably paid for all the champagne and extra wines which were consumed (neither Mr. Roberts nor his son Edward ever appearing sufficiently acquainted with the manners of the place to be at all aware of what was going on), notwithstanding that these greatly-prized and various advantages were obtained gratis, Mrs. Roberts found that the paying ready money for the half-dozen chairs so frequently engaged for the use of herself and her family, was exceedingly *troublesome*, to say the least of it; and besides this, the intervening days generally brought a good deal of extra expense with them in the way of preparing for pic-nics. True, again, the wine was always furnished by the same gentlemen; but, even in Germany, hams, chickens, turkeys, tongues, lamb, salads, crawfish, and fruits, cost something—though not so much, “thank Heaven!” Mrs. Roberts observed, “as they did in Leadenhall-market.” Yet still they did cost something, and so much, in fact, that, had not a very convenient

large poultry farmer, willing to sell produce to English *my lords*, on credit, been happily discovered, with an obliging butcher and Italian warehouseman acting on the same principles, the inconvenience would have been considerable. As it was, however, the victualling department went merrily on, and many were the *fast* dinners eaten within the sober shades of the Black Forest during that delightful season. Although there was, for the most part, a good deal of sympathy and happy community of feeling among the members of the Roberts family on the subject of all these fêtes and festivals, there were occasions on which the daily improving Edward seemed inclined to assert the rights of independent manhood, and to estrange himself from the rest of the party. He had, in truth, made an attempt to introduce his admired, or, as he called her, his *adored* Madame de Marquemont, to the society of his family and their elegant friends; but this attempt was effectually checked by that lady herself, who confessed to him, amidst a great deal of very touching agitation, that she was growing conscious of feelings towards him, which she could not endure to expose to the scrutiny of either

curious or indifferent eyes. I scarcely need say that such a reason as this could not be combated; and it therefore followed, as a matter of course, that Edward was not always, or even often, of the pic-nic parties—a privation which his mother endured the better, as it exonerated him from the bore of contributing his contingent to the fees for sight-seeing, horse-holding, and the like, which such excursions are sure to bring with them. By degrees, too, Mrs. Roberts discovered that it would be more convenient, for the same reason, to have his father absent likewise; and then came the amiable feeling, that it would be very kind if she staid at home herself to dine with him. This made it quite unnecessary to send a large basket; and the excessive liberality of the Princess Fusky-muskoff, who thus became *chaperone* of the party, soon made it quite unnecessary to send any basket at all; and from this time forward the pic-nics gained upon the *table d'hôte*, so that a week seldom passed without four of these excursions being arranged.

No country in the world can be more favourable for these pretty variations upon the old air, “*Amusons nous,*” than the neighbourhood of

Baden-Baden ; and, during the first half-dozen parties of this kind, Bertha, notwithstanding all her sorrows, enjoyed herself exceedingly. She had new landscapes to look upon, new sketches to make, and her well-beloved cousin William at her side to take care of her, and to make every thing look still fairer than it was. As to her Highness of Fuskymuskoff, how she performed the duties of *chaperone*, or how she took care of herself, Bertha neither knew nor cared ; and, if asked to give an account of each party on her return from it, by any one whom she thought worthy of an answer, she would have assured them that-it had been the most delightful scheme she had ever been engaged in, and that she only hoped a great many more would follow like it. But, somehow or other, Mr. Vincent did not like these pic-nic parties quite so well as his young cousin. It was not that he felt himself unhappy, either, for he certainly enjoyed the scenery, admired Bertha's power of rapid sketching exceedingly, and appeared to like the walking about with her in search of subjects, and the sitting down beside her while she executed them, very much. Yet, nevertheless, he said to her one evening after their

return from one of these excursions, which she thought the most agreeable they had yet taken, "I am afraid, Bertha, that you will think me a very tyrannical sort of cousin, for I am going to desire you not to do what I believe you like doing better than any other thing within your reach at present. Do you think you shall be able to forgive an interference so little amiable?"

Bertha looked at him earnestly for a moment, and then replied with great simplicity, "I think I could forgive you for any thing except your telling me that you would not talk to me or walk with me any more. And do you know, cousin William, I cannot help thinking that it is exactly this that you are going to say," she added, while the colour mounted to her cheeks, and a tear began very visibly to gather in her eye, "for you *must* know that it is what I like best—and certainly I shall think it very unkind."

Vincent coloured too as he listened to her. But the emotion was not caused by his finding in her words any reason for supposing that Lord Lynberry was right in the fears he had expressed for the fair Bertha's peace of mind. It was rather, perhaps, the assured conviction that he was quite

wrong, which caused the change in his complexion. Not, perhaps, that the almost destitute Vincent would have wished it otherwise—under the circumstances, it would have been a sin to do so. But whatever the source of the feeling, he mastered it quickly, and replied, “No, dear Bertha, no, it is not that. Could anything make me think *that* necessary, I should be quite as sorry as you could be. On the contrary, however, what I have to say to you will, I fear, sound very like desiring you neither to talk nor to walk with any one but me.”

“Indeed?” said Bertha, with a very happy-looking smile.

“Yes, indeed, it must sound very like it; for the fact is, that I want you to promise me that you will not go to any more of these picnic parties,” he replied.

“Oh! if that be all, I can promise it with perfect readiness,” she returned.

“And yet, dear Bertha, I am sure you enjoy them greatly.”

“I enjoy seeing the beautiful country, and I enjoy drawing in the open air, with you at my elbow to tell me when I am right and when I am

wrong; but as to enjoying the parties because they *are* parties—I don't think you suspect me of it."

"That is quite true, Bertha, it would be but affectation if I said I did. And yet I almost wonder, too, that you should not be a little offended at my interference, because I suspect it must appear so very unreasonable to you."

"Perhaps," replied poor Bertha, "I am not offended, as you call it, at your interference, because it is such a comfort to me to know that I still have a relation near me, who cares for me enough to interfere about me at all. And besides that, cousin William, I know perfectly well that you would not do this, nor any thing else, without having good and sufficient reason for it. And you may be very sure that I shall go to no more pic-nics at Baden."

"I thank you, dear Bertha, for your confidence in me—and I thank you the more because you do not ask for my reasons, which, to say truth, I should not be very well able to give explicitly. I certainly know very little either for or against these Russian people, but yet I think that I am only doing what is right in wishing you not to

join any more in their gay doings. I heard them talking yesterday of sending a band of wind instruments to some place in the forest, where they said there was level turf that would do to waltz upon. Now all this might be very pleasant, and perfectly unobjectionable, among intimate friends and acquaintance. But the very fact that we do not really know any thing about these people is, in my opinion, quite reason sufficient to render it objectionable for Miss Harrington to be thrown into such very familiar association with them."

"Then Miss Harrington will associate with them no more," replied Bertha, smiling; "or, at least, not in such a sort as to involve any species of familiarity."

And Bertha kept her word, in spite of the very strongest hints that Mrs. Roberts could venture to give about its not being right for young people to affect singularity, and separate themselves from their young companions, particularly when they might have the great advantage of being *chaperoned* by a princess.

In the first instance, it is probable that Mrs. Roberts's objection to Bertha's staying at home,

arose from the being obliged to provide a dinner for her—the *tête-à-tête* repasts of Mr. Roberts and his lady being upon a very small scale indeed; but a very strong additional objection soon became obvious to her, although she dared not make any open remonstrance on the subject; for Mrs. Roberts had quite given up her notion that Bertha was an idiot, though she still thought her the very stupidest girl she had ever known; but she thought that this dulness was mixed with a monstrous deal of self-willed obstinacy, which might lead her any day, if she got into an ill humour, to write to her father for the purpose of asking him to allow her to return. This new objection to Bertha's constant refusals to join the pic-nics arose from the manner in which her afternoons and evenings were passed at home. When the Roberts family had been first blessed with the acquaintance of Lord Lynberry, Mrs. Roberts had, in the most cordial manner, expressed both to the young man and his tutor her hope that they would make her pleasant Balcony-room as useful as if it were their own; and, at any rate, that they would always come and take their tea with her. Their doing so, when nothing else

was going on to prevent it, had become quite a habit, and it was one of which Mr. Vincent profited without scruple now; treating Bertha precisely as if she had been a younger sister, bringing such books as he wished her to read, and assisting her in her study of German with all the steady perseverance of a professional instructor.

"This will never do, Edward," said the alarmed lady to her son, eagerly seizing a momentary *tête-à-tête* that she caught with him one morning before breakfast. "If you can believe that such a girl as Bertha, growing prettier and prettier every day, and such a young fellow as Vincent, can go on in the way they do without making love—if you can believe it, I can't."

"How you do delight to plague me about that girl, ma'am!" replied the young man, continuing his search in the table-drawer for a lost glove; "and how many more times will it be necessary for me to tell you, that I don't care the tenth part of a penny whether she fall in love with Mr. Tutor Vincent or not?"

"Then if *you* don't care, sir, I do," replied his mother, with more anger than she had ever

evinced towards him during the course of his whole life ; “and how many times will it be necessary for me to tell *you*, I wonder, that without her fortune we are one and all of us likely to prolong our residence on the Continent by being locked up in a gaol? Your father says, that he can’t get at a single penny of principal money without a most horrible loss; and what is worse still, both to him and to me too, it can’t be done without exposing whatever little mistakes we have made about prices abroad, to that nasty low fellow that manages the old banking concern. Think, then, what it must be to me, Edward, to hear you speak in this light, careless way, about the only thing that there seems left in the wide world to save us! Your father says that he can’t give me another shilling for the next month without actually borrowing it or taking it up. And I don’t believe there is a shop in the town where we don’t owe something.”

“I dare say not, ma’am,” replied the young man, taking out a small pocket-comb, and currying his little moustache in the glass, “I can answer for a good many of them myself. The taking this great house has proved very conve-

nient in that respect, and so has our intimacy with Lynberry and Montgomery. They have both of them more money, lucky dogs, than they know what to do with—for they neither of them play—every body knows that, so their credit is first-rate.”

“But what has that to do, Edward, with your marrying Bertha Harrington? For mercy’s sake speak to me like a reasonable being! What has that to do with your marrying Bertha Harrington?”

“It has a great deal to do with it, ma’am. It will enable me to go on and keep moving till the proper time comes for me to take her.”

“Gracious goodness! how you talk, Edward! It is really enough to drive one wild. Take her, indeed! I should like to know what good it will be to take her when she is the wife of another man?—and so she will be, if you do not look about you a little.”

“Mother!” said the young man, raising his voice, “let me tell you, once for all, that I will not be plagued about this odious girl before it is necessary. At this moment I not only hate her, but am passionately in love with another woman,

and I will not have my happiness interfered with. That I *must* have her money, I know as well as you do; and have it I will, ma'am, you may depend upon it."

"But, my dear boy, this is dreadfully wild talk. You can't rob her of her money; you can't take it out of her pocket, Edward."

"No, mother, I intend to take it pocket and all. But it must be done at my own time, and in my own way."

His mother gazed at him with a look half puzzled, half admiring.

"Oh, Edward!" said she, "I do think, considering what a mother I have been to you, that you might take me into your confidence, and tell me exactly what you mean."

"Well, ma'am, I will," he replied, "provided you will give me your promise not to tell my father, nor, indeed, any one else. I may, perhaps, want a little of your assistance when the time comes, so it is as well that you should know it. But, remember! you must swear to mention it to no one."

"Well, Edward, well, I swear I won't."

"Then I will tell you," replied her son, "but

upon my soul not even the winds must hear it," and, leaving the glass, pocketing his little comb at the same instant, he came close to his mother, and whispered something in her ear.

The colour mounted to her face, and she shook her head, but she smiled, and betrayed no token of displeasure, though for a moment or two she remained perfectly silent. At length she said, "But it will require money, my dear fellow: where will you be able to get ready money from?"

"Where I have got it from before, ma'am. Do you really suppose, mother, that I can go on in such a place as this, with nothing but the odd dollars and francs that I squeeze out of you? You are monstrously mistaken if you do. Lynberry, ma'am, will lend me whatever money I want."

"Lynberry!" exclaimed the delighted mother, in a perfect ecstasy of hope and joy, "Lynberry? Is it possible that that dear creature, Lynberry, has lent you money, Edward! Then, thank Heaven! I *am* right, as, I must say, I generally find that I am. Lynberry is in love with Maria, my dear Edward. No young man lends money, you may depend upon it, without having

some such motive for it. I thought it, Edward, from the very first—that is from the very first, after he got over his ridiculous fancy for Bertha; of which, I must say, he seemed heartily ashamed afterwards. Well then, my dear boy, I will tease you no more about Bertha, but trust entirely to you, who, I must in common justice say, have shown in every way that you deserved my confidence. And now, my dear, I won't detain you any longer; and, indeed, I have enough to do myself, for before we sit down to breakfast I must settle with my darling Maria what she is to do about getting a new bonnet—whether it will be better to go again to the same shop, or to begin a little bill at the one just opposite to us. It is not quite so stylish a shop, but then it may be convenient, so I'll just go—”

And not perceiving that her son had already escaped from her, the happy mother went on commenting on her own admirable contrivances, till she had passed through the door which opened upon the apartment of her daughters.

CHAPTER XIV.

YET, notwithstanding all these favourable appearances, there were some things that did not go quite well with the Robertses. In the first place, Edward, though for some time fortune ebbed and flowed with him so regularly, that the result was not more against him than the half dozen Napoleons he occasionally got out of Lord Lynberry sufficed to cover, at least seemed to become the especial mark of the fickle goddess's ill-humour; for, night after night, the red and the black, and the black and the red, invariably changed sides as he changed his bets, and for ever voted against him. After staking his last piece and

losing it, he was compelled to whisper to the fair friend (who still faithfully adhered to his side, and failed not to share his luck, whenever, as in days past, it had occasionally brought him in a few pieces—taking care, at the same time, to make him understand that her “odious husband” would kill her, if she ever staked a franc of his money) to her sympathising ear he was compelled to whisper that he could play no more at present, as he had really lost all his ready money.

“Borrow of the croupier,” she whispered in return.

“Of the croupier, sweet love!” he murmured in reply, for they were now upon very affectionate terms together: “of the croupier, Louisa? He would see me at the devil first.”

“Try him, *mon ami*,” she returned; “we have been such constant attendants here, that for once, at least, I am quite sure that you will succeed.”

“I have no more money about me,” said Edward, in his best French, addressing the man with a degree of cool assurance that did infinite honour to his rapidly improving strength of mind: “lend me a few pieces, will you?”

“How much?” was the man’s equally cool reply,

stretching out his hand to one of the little mountains of silver money that stood piled before him.

"Oh! five hundred francs," said Madame de Marquemont, carelessly.

"Yes, five hundred francs," repeated Edward, "I certainly do not intend to lose more than that to-night."

And five hundred francs the croupier handed to him, and five hundred francs the croupier raked back again, within a marvellously short space of time; for once only, during the process of thus returning it whence it came, did any bet return to him.

Five hundred francs at the gaming-table of Baden-Baden is a very small sum; but every thing is comparative, and to Edward, at that moment, the loss seemed to involve absolute destruction, for where was he to find money to acquit him of the debt he had thus contracted? And to delay the doing so beyond the following morning, was, in gaming-table language, impossible. He felt exceedingly sick, but rallied his powers sufficiently to say, as he mechanically presented his arm to the charming Madame de Marquemont, "I shall be here again to-morrow."

The croupier nodded his head, without suspending for an instant the "*Faites votre jeu*," by the uttering of which he so perseveringly gains his own subsistence, and destroys that of other people.

The ill-pleased pair walked away in rather gloomy silence; and though Madame speedily recovered herself, and invited her companion, when they arrived at her lodgings, to enter with her, as she knew the "brute," her husband, was not at home, he declined it, declaring that he had a devilish headache.

The hour was already too late to give him any chance of seeing Lord Lynberry that night, and the decidedly very uncomfortable young gentleman went home and crept to bed, as he had often done before, without any member of the family being aware of the hour of his return. But, late as it was when he went to bed, he was up early enough in the morning to catch Lord Lynberry, as he was in the act of leaving his hotel to take his first morning lounge to the library. The audacity of Edward Roberts was certainly increasing every day; he, nevertheless, felt a disagreeable dryness in his throat, as he prepared himself,

for the fourth time within three weeks, to ask his noble friend to lend him money. But *it must be done*—and, making a strong effort to speak in his usual tone of voice, he said,

“*A propos*, my dear lord, will you have the kindness to lend me five hundred francs more? which I shall be able to pay, with the seven hundred and fifty I have had already, in a day or two, when my father expects to receive money from London.”

Lord Lynberry was as generous, thoughtless, good-natured a young fellow as ever lived, and really felt so much positive pleasure in doing a kindness, as to render the act of refusing very distasteful, nay, even difficult to him; but, to say truth, he was beginning to get tired of the Roberts' concern altogether. The naughty-boy-like fun, of watching the progressive vehemence of Miss Maria's admiration, love, esteem, and devotion, was beginning to pall; and, to do him justice, he was also beginning to feel that he ought to be ashamed of himself for suffering her to display such egregious folly. These thoughts had been working within him for three whole days, and for three whole days he had been meditating

how best to confess to Vincent that he was getting sick of Baden-Baden, though there still remained a multitude of projected excursions unperformed.

The first compliance with Edward Roberts's request for a loan of money was part and parcel of the foolish frolic for amusing himself with the family, of which he was now repenting; and the repetitions of it arose from want of firmness enough to enable him to say "No," where he had before said "Yes;" but now his mood was changed, and he almost felt as if he were atoning for some of the folly he had committed before, when he replied to the above demand by saying,

"You must excuse me, Mr. Roberts, I really cannot do any more for you in that way—it would be inconvenient to me. Good morning to you."

However little right the unlucky Edward had to count upon continued supplies from his young lordship, he felt exceedingly offended at receiving this rebuff, and turned abruptly away, with an air of as much lofty indignation, as if he had been refused assistance in some great and glorious enterprise to which he had devoted himself. Something else, however, must be done,

and done immediately; and the sort of desperate conviction of this which rushed upon his mind, gave him the necessary energy of seeking his father and mother, whom he was determined to attack together, with the assurance, unmitigated by any vain ceremony in the manner, that he must have a pretty considerable sum of money, and that directly.

“The thing may as well be done at once,” soliloquized the young man, as he directed his steps towards the Balcony House; “I know perfectly well that I shall have to pay for all the things Louisa has bought, when she has made me go with her to the different shops—the poor, dear creature, in fact, never attempted to conceal it, and a man must be a brute as great as her husband to refuse her—so I had better ask for the whole together—I must ask for two hundred pounds; less would be of no use to me. Having thus screwed his courage to the necessary pitch, he ran up the stairs with rather a more rapid and decided step than usual; and, throwing open the door of the room where the family were assembled at breakfast, he felt comforted at being addressed by Agatha with a reproach for being so late.

“We have all quite finished breakfast,” she added, “and I don’t believe there is any coffee left.”

“Never mind the coffee, I don’t want—I mean I have had my breakfast already; and if you girls have finished, I wish you would all bundle away. I want to speak to the governor and my mother.”

“A very polite style of sending us out of the room,” said Maria; “but have the goodness, before we obey, to tell me if you have seen Lord Lynberry this morning?”

“Yes, Maria, I have; and now begone, or I will beg him never to dance with you again.”

The young lady then departed, with a glance and a nod, sufficiently indicative of the degree of value which attached, in her estimation, to any attempt at separating from her the devoted Lynberry. The two other girls had preceded her in silence.

The anticipations of the father and mother respecting the nature of the communication they were about to receive, differed widely. The mother had no doubt whatever that her accomplished son was about to make a bold demand for “ways and means to carry on the war,” as he was wont

facetiously to describe his wants; while the father, greatly less enlightened as to the real state of affairs, confidently anticipated some interesting intelligence concerning the progress of his matrimonial alliance. This idea put the good gentleman into such high spirits, that, contrary to the usual family custom, it was he who spoke first when the door was shut and the conclave opened.

“You are quite right, Edward, to let us know how things go on from time to time; and I hope, my dear boy, from your lively manner, that you have now got something pleasant to tell us. Miss Bertha is a shy sort of a girl, I fancy, and not so easily brought to say ‘YES’ as some might be, but I don’t think, when all’s said and done, she will have much of a chance against you, Edward, eh?”

“Bertha Harrington is queer-tempered enough, sir,” replied the young man with a sneer, “but like all the other girls in the world, she will find her master, sooner or later. It is not about her, sir, however, that I now want to talk to you; once for all, I am ready to pledge my word to you that she shall be my wife, and that at no very distant time. And that there is no joking or folly

meant when I say this, my mother can tell you as well as I, for she knows more about it than most people."

"And very right and proper she should, Edward. She is the very best of mothers, and the very best of managers; and a son that would not confide in her would be altogether undeserving of the name," said the worthy gentleman.

"All true, sir. And now, if you please, we will come to what I have to say at present. I must have money, sir, and that directly—I must have money, sir, and what I dare say you will consider as a pretty considerable sum; but if I do not get it all, the fat will be in the fire, I promise you; and there will be an end of my marriage, which is as certain as if we had been before the parson already—ask my mother else—but there will be an end, once and for ever, to that, and for all hopes about the girls into the bargain."

Poor Mr. Roberts became very red in the face, and looked at his wife, who knew as well as he did (excellent manager as she was) that he had drawn his account for interest with the bank in London as dry as his draughts could make it, and that the last five-franc piece he had in his pocket

had gone the day before to pay for the mending of a pair of boots. There was a silence of about a minute, which at last was broken by Edward, who, finding his courage rather increase than diminish at sight of his father's dismay, said, rather sternly than humbly,—“Well, sir, will you please to give me an answer? Is my name and character to be blown from one end of Baden to the other, or will you advance me two hundred pounds?”

Mrs. Roberts started when she heard this sum named, for it exceeded, at least tenfold, the amount of the demand she had expected. But Mrs. Roberts was too good a manager not to have long ago decided in her own mind what must be done, if any particular circumstance—the marriage of either of her three children, for instance—or the unexpectedly finding that she had longer bills against her at the different shops than she anticipated—rendered it absolutely necessary for them to get hold of something beyond their income in order to get on. She started, certainly, at hearing Edward say so coolly that he must immediately have two hundred pounds; but it instantly occurred to her, nevertheless, that it would be a

monstrous good thing to have the first difficulty got over respecting this first drawing upon capital —by far the greatest objection to it in her mind being the difficulty of making Mr. Roberts perceive the necessity, without leading him to suspect any deficiency of good management on her part. She knew well and practically, that “*c’est le premier pas qui coute*,” and, the system once begun, she felt as confidently assured that success would attend all her schemes, as Napoleon did when he decided upon his invasion of Russia. That things had gone differently from what she had anticipated, when she represented the great economy of living abroad as the principal reason for deciding upon it, she was quite ready to avow. But had she anticipated such a magnificent revolution in the affairs of the whole family, as that which she now contemplated as too certain to be impeded by any thing, save some abominably bad management on their own part? The marriage of Edward with Bertha, she had her own private reasons for believing as certain (to use her own phrase) as any thing on this side eternity could be. That of Maria and Lord Lynberry, her common sense (she said) told her was little less so;

and as for that of Agatha with Mr. Montgomery—whom they had lately had the indescribable satisfaction of discovering was the Honourable Mr. Montgomery, and of whose engagement to his cousin, Lady Charlotte, Agatha had not thought it either necessary or proper to say any thing—as to *that* very splendid connexion, Mrs. Roberts, from a feeling of justice to the admirable judgment of her eldest daughter, could not permit herself to doubt. Agatha, she knew, had not that almost childish expansiveness of heart which distinguished her lovely Maria from every girl she had ever known; but then her very silence was, from the peculiarity of her very superior character, the strongest possible proof that she knew what she was about, and that every thing in that quarter was exactly as it should be. Could she then—could Mrs. Roberts, blessed as she was with a strength of mind not to be shaken by trifles—could she permit herself to be terrified and driven to abandon such glorious hopes, because a little extra money would be wanted to carry them through?

She waited for the first emotion which the words of Edward had produced on the mind of his

father to subside; but when at length she heard him draw a long breath, and utter the words "God bless my heart and soul!" she addressed him thus:—"My dear Mr. Roberts, you look as frightened as if Edward had told you that the house was on fire, or that his sisters had eloped with two tinkers! I am sure I shall be as sorry as you can be, if the dear boy has been guilty of any imprudent extravagance, though, mixed up as he is at present with the first rank of European aristocracy, it must be very, *very* difficult indeed, poor fellow! to keep perfectly within bounds. But it is quite time, my dear Roberts, that we should have a little serious conversation together on the unexpected situation in which we find ourselves; and I am very well pleased that Edward should be present at it, because, in fact, the subject concerns him even more than it does us. You must be aware, my dear Roberts, that our situation is at this moment vastly higher, an immense deal higher, you know, as to our rank in society, than ever it was before, or, to say the honest truth, than we any of us ever dreamed it would be. No, this is not to be done for nothing. I never pretended to be a fairy; and nobody that was not

like Cinderella's godmother could be expected to transmogrify a banker and his family, who were just ruining themselves by straining and striving to live in Baker-street, into people of first-rate distinction at the most fashionable watering-place in Europe, and that without paying for it. Such things may be done easily enough in a fairy tale, but not out of it; and I should be sorry to think that you were so behind-hand in intellect as to expect it."

"No, no, my dear, no, no," said Mr. Roberts, "I never did expect it, I do assure you; but only you know my not expecting it will not make me one penny the richer, nor one bit the more able to let Edward have the two hundred pounds he talks about."

"This is no time for joking, sir," returned his wife, knitting her brows into a very awful frown; "we are now talking of business, and of the future destiny of the family, and I must beg that you will not talk nonsense if you can help it."

Mrs. Roberts really was, in her own particular line, a *very* good manager. She knew that her husband could sometimes resist pretty toughly, on

points of finance, when he was in a courageous mood; but she knew also that a little sharp brow-beating was very apt to disable him, leaving him pretty much at her disposal, to goad or to lead, as she might find most convenient. And such was the case now, for this injunction not to talk nonsense if he could help it, made him look as meek as a lamb.

“In short, my dear,” she resumed, with an encouraging kindness of manner which showed that she did not intend to scold him if he behaved well, “in short there is but one way. At the present moment poor dear Edward must see what he can do in the way either of borrowing, or putting off for a few days these claims upon him. His affairs, I can tell you, will be very satisfactorily settled, and at no very distant day, exactly in the way we most wish. But in the mean time you must write to have a power of attorney sent out to you instantly—without losing a single post, remember. Of course you will appoint the same good plodding soul who has done all our business for us since we have been away, and this power of attorney must enable him to send out to us whatever money we may want to draw for from

the capital in the bank. We need not draw a penny the more, you know, because we make this arrangement. What we *must* have, we must—there is no good in talking about it, but mere weakness and folly, and nothing else; and I am sure I need not tell you, Roberts, that I am the very last woman in the world likely to persuade you to spend a single farthing beyond what the welfare of your family demands. We are certainly making a great effort for our dear children, and I rejoice to tell you, my dear, that they are all of them likely to be so settled in life as to give them the power in after years of proving to us the gratitude they feel. They are excellent children, one and all of them! and it rarely happens, I believe, that parents, in making this sort of exertion for the good of their offspring, can see the reward for it so close before their eyes as we do.”

Mrs. Roberts then intimated by a glance of her eye to Edward, that he might as well be off; and glad enough to escape both questionings and counsel, he obeyed, full of admiration for his mother, and exceedingly well satisfied by the new regulation as to money matters which she had so

ably achieved; for the pen was already in the worthy Mr. Roberts's hand, with which he was to make this praiseworthy effort for the good of his family;—but a little anxious, nevertheless, as to what he should do to pacify his friend the croupier during the days which must of necessity intervene before this effort could produce its first results. In tolerably good spirits, however, notwithstanding this temporary difficulty—for the young Edward saw a very easy future opening before him—he immediately repaired to the lodgings of Madame de Marquemont, whom he was sure to find alone at that hour; and no longer oppressed with the terror of not knowing whence was to come the fund that was to free him from the very peculiarly pressing claims which weighed upon him, he entered, with all the confidential freedom of tender friendship, into a sufficiently clear statement of the manner in which his excellent father was at that moment engaged, to make the intelligent Madame de Marquemont perfectly understand that his present distress was only temporary; and when he mentioned that he had already asked for two hundred pounds, which demand he meant to double when the power of drawing was

fully established, her affectionate temper led her to express her joy at her friend's release from embarrassment with so much gentle kindness, that at the moment he certainly felt himself one of the happiest men in the world,—especially when she dismissed him with the assurance that she would undertake to say a word to the croupier, who was a very good sort of fellow, and rather an old acquaintance of hers; and that she was quite sure he would not only wait patiently for the trifle he had already lent, but willingly advance more, if they liked to try their luck again before the money came.

This was precisely all that Edward wanted to complete his happiness. He had rather a mysterious feeling of dread of the croupier, who appeared to him a sort of high priest presiding over the most awe-inspiring rites which he had ever witnessed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE satisfaction of Mrs. Roberts herself, at the peaceable and perfectly satisfactory result of her interview with her husband, was scarcely less vivid than that of her son. She was aware, perhaps, rather better than even the young man himself, of the absolute and immediate necessity of enlarging their means of obtaining money; for she knew, with vastly more accuracy than he did (the natural consequence, this, of her habits of good management), how many different shops, farms, and market-women she owed money to; and this knowledge, joined to the maternal responsibilities which rested upon her for his bills and

the young ladies' bills too, had made her for some time past very far from easy in her mind as to the present, notwithstanding the unspeakable delight with which she contemplated the future. But now she saw her way clearly before her. The benefits awaiting her, if she could only continue for a few weeks longer her present mode of living, were so great and so certain, that no shadow of scruple as to the wisdom of the course she was pursuing crossed the bright perspective which stretched before her. Confident in the success of her plans—conscious and proud of the talent and the conjugal influence which she was sure would enable her to attain that success, Mrs. Roberts was at that moment one of the very happiest and most perfectly well satisfied women in existence. She knew perfectly well that she, or rather her unconscious husband, was overwhelmed by a burden of debt, which nothing could clear them from but the breaking in upon the fund which was to provide for the future existence of their children. She knew that the young lady upon whose fortune she reckoned, as the means of ensuring to her son a handsome provision for life, had given every indication that

a young lady could do of holding him in supreme aversion. She knew that neither of her daughters had received any proposal of marriage from either of the gentlemen whom she had fixed upon as her future sons-in-law; and she knew, moreover, that if they had, there was a tolerably near approach to a moral certainty, that every friend and relation these gentlemen had in the world would come forward to oppose what it was utterly impossible they could approve. All this she knew as well as you do, gentle reader; yet such and so great were the hallucinations produced by the novel circumstances in which she found herself, that she as completely lost all sense of her true position, as a child does after turning round and round and round till he is giddy. None but a looker-on, and one, too, quite at leisure to observe what is passing around him, could fully comprehend, or, perhaps, fully believe, such a state of mind to be possible in any one of healthier mental capacity than an idiot; yet it is most assuredly the fact, that a monomaniacal disorder of the judgment, amounting in degree to that here ascribed to Mrs. Roberts, may be perpetually seen to beset individuals who have

been suddenly transported from a sober middle class of English society into the midst of the puzzling mosaic of a continental watering-place.

It is all very well for Russian generals, Polish princesses, German barons, French dukes, Italian marquises, Swedish counts, &c. &c. &c., with all their fair and noble belongings (mixed up with a few English *milors*)—it is all very well for these to rush about from one favourite place of amusement to another, sparkling in diamonds, and stars, and broad-breasted *rateaux* of decorations innumerable. It is all very well for them. They understand one another perfectly. There is no delusion, no dazzling deception in the case. But woe to the unlucky third-class English gentleman and his family, who, bringing with them nothing but English gold and English beauty as tickets of admission to the noble phalanx—woe to him and his, if he or they thrust themselves into the vortex, and fancy they can spin round in it unscathed like the rest! What the others look upon as the amusement of an hour, they contemplate as the most important epoch of their lives. And important it often is to them, Heaven knows!

rendering them utterly and for ever unfit for the station in life in which they were born and bred, without affording a gleam of reasonable hope that they shall obtain any other one hundredth part as good.

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It is probable that Agatha saw something in the countenance of her mother, as she left the scene of the conference which has been described in the last chapter, that led her to believe the present moment would be favourable for discussing a little business of her own.

“ I wish you would come into our room for a moment, mamma,” said she, “ I have something that I want to show you.”

“ And what’s that, my dear ?” replied her mother gaily. “ But let it be what it will, I am ready to see it.”

“ I don’t believe you will admire it much,” muttered the young lady, as she led the way to the sleeping apartment of herself and her sister. On reaching it, Mrs. Roberts perceived that the bed, and most of the chairs, and other articles of furniture, were covered with a variety of wearing apparel, bonnets and shawls inclusive, which

spoke more plainly of past gaiety than of present neatness.

“Just look at all these things, ma’am, if you please,” said Agatha, putting herself into a sort of stiff and stately attitude, with her arms crossed before her. “Perhaps you remember, ma’am, what I said to you some time ago on the subject of *consistency*. I wish you would have the goodness to recall it to your mind now, as I think it might be useful in assisting you to make up your mind as to the propriety, or impropriety, of our pretending to continue in the brilliant circle of society in which we move at present. How do you suppose the Princess Fuskymuskoff will relish my continuing to appear with her, arm-in-arm, upon the public walks, in such a bonnet and mantle as this?”

Mrs. Roberts took up the bonnet, which she placed upon her finger, turning it round and round, the better to examine it on all sides.

“Upon my word, Agatha,” she said, with a pleasant smile, “if I had never known that you were a very handsome, elegant-looking girl before, I should know it now. It really is hardly possible to believe that you have actually been

wearing this horrid thing—and yet, positively, looking like a well-dressed girl of fashion all the time ! You certainly must be beautiful, child.”

“ It matters very little how beautiful I may be, ma’am,” replied her daughter, “ if I am forced to appear in such dresses as these. I will not scruple to say it, for I don’t see any reason why I should ; but I do think in my heart, that unless you and papa find some means to enable us to dress decently—I don’t speak of myself only, observe, but of Maria also, whose two silk morning dresses I cannot look upon without feeling myself colour to the very ears—I say, ma’am, that unless you and papa do find out some means of clothing us decently, we shall both of us have a right to consider ourselves as having been most abominably ill-used.”

“ Well then, please to listen to me, Agatha,” began Mrs. Roberts ; but she was not permitted to proceed.

“ I beg your pardon, ma’am,” said her eldest daughter, holding up her finger to stop her, “ I really beg your pardon, but I do beg you will not begin to answer till you have heard what I have

got to say. I have gone on silently for some time past, in the hope from day to day that you would say something yourself about the necessity of leaving off these faded, worn-out things. But no! day after day passes on. You hear us invited by ladies of the very highest rank to join them in parties, to which they go as elegantly dressed as if they were going to Longchamps; while we have nothing to wear that their waiting-maids would not have thrown away long ago. The agony of appearing before the eyes of these illustrious ladies, dressed so disgracefully, is bad enough—but it is by no means of this that I the most complain. The cruelty of the privation is felt ten million times more in another direction. You cannot be ignorant of the fact, ma'am, that Maria has inspired a young nobleman of high rank and enormous fortune with a passion likely to lead to the most gratifying results—I say nothing of myself—I wish to say nothing. My destiny, perhaps, is as yet less plainly marked out; one thing concerning it is, however, assuredly certain, namely, that I have formed intimacies—let me rather say friendships—here, which will for ever render it impossible for me to

submit to any association with persons not of exalted rank—whether I marry or whether I live single, my doom is fixed in that respect. It is possible that I may die, mamma; that I may die before your eyes, if the admirable management by which you have contrived to introduce us to the very first society in the world, should fail now, and oblige us to conceal ourselves from the eyes of all we love and value upon earth! This is possible—but it is *not* possible that I should ever again consent to be taken into such society as we were introduced to formerly. *This* I never will endure. No! not if the only way of escaping from it is by suicide!” And here the young lady ceased, striking her fair forehead with her open palm in a manner which betrayed very strong emotion.

Among several other very remarkable talents, Mrs. Roberts possessed that of being able to whistle, one single note at least, loud, shrill, and long. She availed herself of this talent now, and produced the sound above described with so much strength and perseverance, that both her daughters applied their hands to their ears, exclaiming, as by common consent, “Oh! don’t, mamma!

don't!" Mrs. Roberts, however, ceased not till her breath failed her, which was not soon; and then, recruiting herself by inhaling at leisure as much of the necessary material as sufficed to display another of her varied talents, she first burst into a hearty laugh, and then said, "Well, my dear, I hope you have had a great deal of pleasure in hearing yourself talk, which, indeed, I cannot doubt, because it was a fine speech, Agatha, particularly the latter end of it—but if, instead of a pleasure, it happened to be any trouble, you might have spared it, and lost nothing; for if you had been pleased to condescend to hear me out when I began to speak, you would have known, lots of time ago, that I had been thinking of your bonnets and shawls, you foolish children, quite as much as yourselves, and perhaps a little more to the purpose, Miss Agatha. For though it never came into my head that I had better kill myself for want of a smart bonnet, I hit upon something that I think will do quite as well, though perhaps it won't make such a good story in the newspaper. But never mind, Agatha, you need not look so terribly solemn because I laugh at you a little. Tell me,

dears, at once, what it is that you most want, and I will tell you in return, that it shall be bought, and paid for too, without losing a moment of time from the first part of the job to the last."

"Oh! my dearest, dear mamma!" exclaimed Maria, letting fall a much worn dress that she had been holding ready to display, and throwing her arms round the maternal throat, "how can I ever thank you enough for saying so? I feel quite sure that my beloved Lynberry would be faithful to me if I wore the dress of a beggar-girl; but yet I won't deny that I have suffered dreadfully from appearing in his eyes such a poor, penniless creature as I have done. The Princess Fuskymuskoff is so exquisitely elegant, you know, that it is quite impossible that he should not see, and feel too, poor fellow! the dreadful contrast."

"I am, indeed, thankful, ma'am," said the elder Miss Roberts, "that we seem to be redeemed from the horrible condition in which my father has chosen to keep us, for I must do you the justice to say, that I believe the fault has not been yours. It is quite evident that your ideas upon the means necessary for sustaining a distinguished situation in society, are greatly

more enlightened than his—poor dear gentleman!” While pronouncing the last three words, Agatha seemed, with some little effort, to throw off the tragic vein in which she had been indulging during the former part of the conversation, and it was almost in a gay accent that she continued: “And now, mamma, I must beg you will tell us how you have managed it. A short and easy method for bringing a stingy old gentleman to reason, may be a secret worth knowing.”

“I hope and trust, dear girls, that you will both of you make such marriages as will render all such secrets unnecessary—for I can tell you that the business is far enough from being a pleasant one. As to *how* the thing was to be done, you know, admitted neither of question nor answer. The business lay in an egg-shell. There was but one way of getting out of the scrape, and *that*, of course, he was obliged to take, whether he liked it or not. When income won’t do, the fund that comes next, you know, is capital, and a trifle from that *must* be taken to enable us to turn this corner. But I beg you to observe, both of you, that my firm intention is now, as it ever has been, to practise the, very strictest economy

in all things. Let your husbands be ever so rich, my dears, depend upon it that a well-regulated system of economy will never do you any harm. I, myself, have always been rather celebrated among my friends and acquaintance for my excellent management in every thing relating to money matters, and I should grieve to think that any daughter of mine should be deficient in a talent upon which I certainly do a little pride myself. I know perfectly well, dears, that you must be made *decent*—that has always been, as you must be aware, my first object ; and the second is, as you know equally well, to do it with the greatest possible economy. I, myself, *must* have a new dress, and a new summer bonnet and cloak immediately. I am excessively sorry for it—but it is *impossible* to help it, and, as the old adage says, what can't be cured must be endured."

"That is quite true, ma'am," replied Agatha, "I declare to you, I very often wish that it were possible to go naked—or, if not quite without clothes, on account of modesty and all that sort of thing, I do most truly and sincerely wish that fashion did not oblige us to put on so many expensive and perfectly useless things as we do.

We should look a monstrous deal better without them."

"That is so like you, Agatha!—you dear odd creature!" returned her mother, laughing. "But now, my dear girls," she continued, putting aside some of the faded finery which encumbered a sofa on which she prepared to place herself, "now let us talk a little of our dear good friends, Lynberry and Montgomery. I hate plaguing my girls about their lovers, as some mothers do, but I *should* like to know a little how matters go on. You feel quite certain, my dears, don't you, that these two charming men are really attached to you?"

"Can I doubt him? Oh! is it possible to doubt such a being as Lynberry?" replied Maria, pressing her hands upon her heart, to still the tumultuous throbbings which this mention of his name occasioned. "You see how devoted he is to me, mamma," she resumed, "and, oh! what a monster of suspicion must that woman be, who could suffer herself for an instant to doubt the truth of a passion that has been proved, a thousand and a thousand times over, by every demonstration that the tenderest love can devise."

“Heaven forbid, my dearest Maria, that I should try to make you suspicious, particularly towards the man who so evidently intends, some day or other, to become your husband! Poor, dear, excellent young man, I am sure I love him already as if he were my own son!”

And here Mrs. Roberts was so strongly affected by the tender words she had herself uttered, that she put a finger in her eye to remove a tear.

“No, Maria,” she continued, “I don’t doubt his faith or his constancy, for a single moment; nevertheless, you know, I should not be at all sorry to hear that the offer was made, because, just in the humour that I have got your father into at present, I think one might be able to coax something handsome out of him in the way of wedding-clothes; but he has not spoken quite out yet, has he, Maria?”

“No, mamma, he has not,” replied Maria, with a sort of firmness which arises from feeling that the truth we utter has nothing in it from which we ought to shrink. “No, mamma, he has not, but if you will take my opinion—and I certainly *ought* to know something about it—I should say that, if papa is really in the sort of humour you

describe, it would be exceedingly wrong indeed not to profit by it. It is impossible for any one to say how soon it may be. It may happen tomorrow—nothing can be more likely. And then, just fancy what a pity it would be if you had to do your disagreeable work all over again! Indeed, indeed, mamma, I advise you to have the money ready if possible, and, let what will happen, I am quite sure that between us we should know very well what to do with it.”

“There is great good sense in what Maria says, ma’am,” observed Agatha, “and if you really have the power of getting hold of money now, and do not profit by it, you will have nobody but yourself to blame for it, whatever misery may come afterwards.”

“That is all very true, Agatha,” returned Mrs. Roberts, “but yet I don’t think I should quite like to ask your father for an additional hundred pounds or so, to buy wedding clothes, unless I was pretty tolerably sure that they would be wanted; so I think I will wait another day or two before I speak about it, Maria.”

“You must do as you please, ma’am,” said Agatha, with a frown, while Maria relieved her

wounded heart—wounded by the injurious doubts of a suspicious mother—by shedding tears. “You certainly must do as you please,” resumed Agatha, “but, I confess, I think you wrong, very wrong indeed.”

“Well, I will think about it again, my dear, before I decide,” said Mrs. Roberts, in return to this remonstrance, adding, though not without a little tremor in her voice, for she was beginning to get a good deal afraid of her elder daughter, “and now, Agatha, do tell me a little how you and Mr. Montgomery get on together? He is a most remarkably charming man, and I am ready to declare any day that he shall have my fullest consent, if he proposes for you, although I know perfectly well that he is only the son of a nobleman, and not a nobleman himself, like our dear Lynberry; but that shall make no difference, not the least, and you could not say anything that I should like to hear better, Agatha, than that he had proposed, and that you had accepted him.”

“I must desire, ma’am, once for all,” replied the young lady, “that you will not give yourself any trouble about my concerns whatever. I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself, and I

must insist upon it that my friendships, whether male or female, are left wholly and entirely to my own management. I consider the friendship of her Highness the Princess Fuskymuskoff as a most important epoch in my destiny; and having once found myself the chosen friend and confidante of such a woman, one of the most illustrious in Europe, it can hardly be expected that I should submit to be called over the coals, and examined like a school-girl, as to what either the men or the women of my acquaintance may choose to say to me. Be satisfied, ma'am, with my assurance, that I will take very good care of myself; and when the time comes, whether it be early or late, that I have anything, either concerning myself or any body else, which I may think it necessary for you to hear, you may depend upon it that I shall communicate it. And now, if you please, I should recommend that we should go shopping—I cannot go to the pic-nic to-morrow without a new parasol, new boots, new gloves, and, most of all, a new bonnet. Perhaps, ma'am, Maria and I had better go on to Humbert's by ourselves, as I know we have both of us a great deal to do, and you can follow us when the carriage comes."

Mrs. Roberts did not venture to make any objection to this arrangement, and the two young ladies set off together, inexpressibly relieved by the liberal permission they had received to make purchases, and happy in the harmony of feeling which produced the mutual avowal, that if there was a bore in the world more detestable than all others, it was the having a mother who chose to busy herself by interfering in her daughters' love affairs.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was within a week after the events and conversations above recorded, that Mr. Montgomery, upon receiving a letter from his cousin, strongly urging his not returning to the neighbourhood of their capricious aunt till the time fixed for their marriage, accosted his young friend Lynberry, on the public walks, with the following abrupt question.

“Well, Lynberry, are you ready to start for Rome? I have had enough of the baths and the bathers. What say you?”

“Say?” repeated the young man. “I will

echo your words, Montgomery—I have had enough of the baths and the bathers.”

“ Well then, tell Vincent so—I am not quite sure, by the way, that I shall find another echo in him. But he is such an excellent fellow, and so thoroughly unselfish upon all occasions, that I am positive he won’t wish to keep you here merely to please himself; and, upon my soul, I don’t think there is any thing more to be seen or said here, particularly necessary for the progress of your education.”

“ I suspect he thinks so too,” replied Lord Lynberry; “ and, though I believe most sincerely that his beautiful cousin is in love with him, and that, consequently, it is utterly impossible he should not be in love with her, I am sure he will be ready to set off the moment I tell him that I think we had better go; and it will be capital good fun travelling together, Montgomery. When do you think you shall start ?”

“ This is Tuesday, is it not ?” returned Montgomery. “ I know of nothing which need detain me beyond Thursday or Friday at the very latest; and, to tell the truth, I don’t wish for any particularly long leave-takings,—do you ?”

"No: my heart is so tender that I could not stand it," replied Lord Lynberry. "Where is Vincent, I wonder?"

"Giving Miss Harrington a lesson in drawing, either in the forest yonder, or in the Murgthal," said Montgomery. "How marvellously true is the proverb which says, 'One may steal a horse, and another may not look over the hedge!' If one of our dear friends—for example, one of the enchanting Robertses—were seen deliberately tucking herself under your arm, or mine, for the purpose of wandering away for hours, *tête-à-tête*, among the mountains, I suppose it would be considered, notwithstanding their particularly *fast* ways, as rather an extra breach of decorum; yet this little creature does it every day of her life with Vincent, and I don't believe it has ever entered the head of any one to fancy there was any thing wrong in it. Is this prejudice and partiality, or only truth and justice?"

"Only truth and justice, Montgomery," returned the young nobleman, "and that sort of self-evident truth, too, which the dullest must see, whether he will or no. If one of the Robertses were invited to make such an escapade, and

could find an opportunity to do it, when they thought nobody was near enough to see, they would be sure to look sneaking, if they did not feel shy; but this little creature, as you call her, looks about her with an air not only innocent, but proud, and evidently glories in what she is about."

"Yes; and that pride, by the way, is in truth the *mot de l'énigme*," said Montgomery, "for it acts doubly. In the first place, the pretty creature is evidently proud in having found a gentlemanlike cousin to take care of her; and in the second, she is proud, and with equal reason, of her own young courage, in so frankly taking advantage of it."

"I believe you are quite right, Montgomery," returned Lord Lynberry; "you really seem to have studied the young lady's character very profoundly."

"No; those who run may read it," replied the other; "and I own to you, that had I not been in love before, yea, and heartily too, I should scarcely have escaped the fascination of her beauty and her originality combined. She certainly is very lovely, and shows well too, from the

marvellously strong contrast which she forms with every thing around her. I really wonder, Lynberry, how you have escaped? I thought you were caught at first, but lo! you suddenly veered about, and fell at the feet of a very different idol."

"I have no fancy for being second best, Mr. Montgomery," replied his young lordship, colouring. "I could, perhaps, have discovered, and appreciated, the real character of Miss Harrington, as accurately as you have done, but I had no wish to contest the fair lady's smiles with my tutor, and threw myself at the feet of the idol you mention, expressly to keep myself out of her way; and, false idol though she be, she has served to save me from offering incense at a shrine too unpropitious to make worship at it any sign of wisdom."

"Quite true, Lynberry. So now hie thee to thy philosophical tutor, and inform him of our wish to move on. If he makes any objection, the very slightest in the world, I shall suspect him of being more like other mortals than you seem to suppose."

"Vincent will make no objection," replied the young man.

“We shall see,” said Montgomery.

The result proved that the young nobleman knew his tutor well. Vincent did *not* make any objection, but declared on the contrary that he thought Lord Lynberry quite right in wishing to get to Rome.

“You will find more profitable amusement there,” he said. “To talk of study to a young nobleman so very nearly his own master, would be mere pedantry,” he added with a smile. “Nevertheless, should any such whim come over you there, you will find the whole region a *studio*, and that of the most inspiring kind.”

But, notwithstanding this very perfect self-command, and the equally perfect abnegation of all selfish feeling, displayed in the promptitude with which Mr. Vincent set every thing in action to facilitate their immediate departure, the sensations produced by the necessity which his duty imposed on him of immediately quitting Baden-Baden were so acutely painful, as for the first time fully to awaken him to a knowledge of his real condition. Then, and not till then, did he become aware that the young girl over whom he had been watching with all a cautious brother’s

care had become dearer to him than life—dearer than every thing that life could give, save the consciousness of uncompromising honour and rectitude. It is not to be supposed, however, that his hired service as a tutor to Lord Lynberry would have been felt by him as a tie sufficiently sacred to interfere with all the happiness of his life. Had this been the only impediment to his devoting himself to Bertha during every hour of his future existence, his good judgment, energy of character, and promptitude of action, would speedily have removed the difficulty. But, alas! this obstacle, when compared with others which existed to divide him from his young cousin, was as an ant-hill to a mountain. His father was a ruined man, and he, therefore, of necessity, was a ruined man also. Bertha was an heiress. Could he then—was it in his nature to take advantage of the circumstances in which he had found her, and which inevitably tended to give him, in every way, value in her eyes, in order to win her affection, and so become possessed of her wealth? He could not do this. Dearly as he loved her, he could not have consented to gain her at that price, and he thanked Heaven that

the same moment which showed him the extent of his danger showed him also the way to escape it. Had he indeed understood more thoroughly how matters stood with her, he might in some degree have acted differently; but of the terrible and mysterious circumstances attending her mother's death he knew nothing. Greatly as she appeared to take pleasure in talking to him of times long past, when he had been known to and fondly beloved by her mother, she shrunk with such evident agony from every allusion to more recent events, and especially from all that related to her mother's death, that he was not only totally ignorant of every suspicion respecting it, but also of the abrupt manner in which Bertha had been sent from her home, and of the powerful reasons which prevented her entertaining any hope of returning to it. Had he indeed known all, he might have thought, and thought justly, that the immediately becoming his wife would be the best course she could adopt. But, as it was, he bent all his meditations upon the best manner of saying farewell, without betraying to her all the misery it cost him. He well knew that she would miss him sadly—he well knew that the protection her

family had so strangely chosen for her was not such as he could leave her in with satisfaction; but no thought that her sorrows would be increased in any other way by the degree of regard she felt for him mixed itself for a moment with his anxiety. And in truth he was right. Bertha had no more idea that she was in love with her cousin than that she was in love with the sun, or the moon, or the Alt Schloss, or any other of the good things which gave flashes of happiness to her existence, in spite of all she had to make her miserable. Mr. Montgomery was quite right when he said that the poor bruised and mortified Bertha felt proud at having found a gentlemanlike cousin to take care of her. And she not only felt proud of this, but she felt proud of being proud of it; and often, when laying her head upon her pillow, and remembering the satisfaction, the delight, perhaps, with which she had listened during the day to some counsel or some brotherly instruction from him, she thanked Heaven that in spite of the degradation of her present circumstances, the spirit of her mother was still sufficiently alive within her to make her cherish what was great and good, notwithstanding all the lowering associations to which she

had been exposed, which might have lessened her value for it. In short, had she loved him at all less, she would have been ashamed of herself. All this was genuine, and so easily read in her words, her looks, and her manner, that Vincent was spared the additional agony of believing that the never-to-be-forgotten pleasure he had enjoyed in her society had been purchased by her peace of mind.

He was, for a moment, a little startled by her turning very pale, as she listened to the announcement of his departure; but this impression wore off as he listened to her earnest entreaties that he would write to her—write to her very often, and always tell her what she ought to do, and particularly when she asked his advice, which she assured him she should do upon all important occasions. This was so little like the language of a young lady in love, that it reassured him; and they parted, to all appearance, as an affectionate brother and sister might have done.

As to the feelings of the two Miss Robertses upon hearing of the departure of Lord Lynberry and Mr. Montgomery, they cannot be described at the fag-end of a chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

IT was after a dinner, perhaps a little less animated and delightful than usual, at the *table d'hôte*, and while the Roberts family, and the three gentlemen who were their constant attendants, paraded up and down the portico before the rooms, that the purposed departure of the latter was announced. Miss Harrington, indeed, had been informed of it during her usual morning's walk with her cousin, but was not conscious either of any inclination or duty, that obliged her to increase the ordinary scanty intercourse between herself and the Roberts family by communicating it. The dreadful news, therefore,

was as unexpected as it was terrible; yet it was communicated with such easy gaiety of manner, as happily enforced the necessity of concealing for a moment the far different feelings with which it was received.

“How dreadfully I missed the dear princess at dinner!” exclaimed Agatha. “She certainly is the most fascinating creature in existence. I wonder we don’t see her! She positively promised to join us here before this time.”

In order to watch for the approach of the fascinating princess and her *cortège*, the different *tête-à-têtes* into which the party usually divided themselves were suspended, and they all stood in a group together on the steps. The observation of Agatha was therefore heard and replied to by her sister, who said, rather fretfully—for Miss Maria did not like standing all together in a group,—

“It is very provoking, indeed; I wish she would come! It is such a bore standing here waiting for her; besides, I want to know what she has decided upon for to-morrow. A pic-nic is to be the order of the day; but her highness seemed undecided between the Murgthal and the mountains. Which shall you like best?” she

added, looking tenderly into the eyes of Lord Lynberry.

“Alas!” exclaimed Montgomery, coming forward to the assistance of his more embarrassed friend; “alas! It matters little what either Lynberry or I may prefer, for Vincent, cruel fellow! has fixed upon to-morrow for starting with his lordship, and I have promised to travel with them.”

Agatha started, and the sort of little convulsive movement which this communicated to the hand that rested on Montgomery’s arm, made him for an instant feel rather ashamed of himself; but Maria groaned aloud, and, relaxing her hold of Lord Lynberry, she seemed about to fall. But the young lordling’s heart was growing hard, and he made a movement so plainly indicative of his intention to let her go if she liked it, that she suddenly grasped him much tighter than ever, and, after repeating the groan in the most touching manner possible, softly whispered in his ear,

“Oh, heavens! Is this true?”

“Yes, indeed, I am sorry to say it is,” he replied, producing, for decency’s sake, something like a sigh. “Vincent says that my father has

fixed this time for our going to Rome, and of course, you know, I must obey orders."

"Oh, yes! of course," re-whispered Maria, with a softer sigh. But happily her heart was at that moment saved from breaking, by remembering that other people might go to Rome as well as Lord Lynberry. Nevertheless, the moment was a very awful one, and she naturally found it necessary to support herself, by leaning her trembling form against that of her too dearly loved supporter.

Lord Lynberry was very kind, however; and, as he pressed her hand in his, as he was a good deal in the habit of doing when they were walking together, she mentally exclaimed,

"All hope is not over yet."

Nay, the trembling weakness of her limbs had so much effect upon him, that he, on his side, mentally exclaimed, "I might be taken in now, if I were plain Dick Archdale!"

Yet, after all, perhaps, the emotions of Mrs. Roberts were the most vehement; for, as usual, in addition to her own tremendous disappointment, and to all her maternal sympathy for the disappointment of her daughters, she had before

her eyes the dread of what was infinitely more painful to her than all the rest—namely, the having to confess to her husband that she was mistaken, and that she was not at all points the very best manager in the world. Happily, however, for her too, a thought arose in this moment of extremity, which enabled her so far to recover herself as to avoid all public display of her emotions. Mr. Roberts was smoking a quiet cigar under a distant tree, in happy unconsciousness of the blast that so cruelly threatened to blight all the hopes of his family; and Mrs. Roberts remembered, in time to save herself from displaying a stronger degree of anger than she wished to make visible, that it was still in her power to represent the matter to him “after what flourish her nature would.” A real offer of marriage from any thing under the rank of a knight, could hardly have consoled her more effectually at that moment than the recollection of her own powers of painting; and it was with an admirable degree of self-command that she said, loud enough for all the party to hear,

“I am truly sorry to find that we are to part so soon, my dear friends, but at any rate I hope

we shall pass this last evening happily together at the Balcony House. Let us walk for half an hour or so in those beautiful shady walks yonder, and then we will go home to tea. Shall we?"

"I am sure it will give us the greatest pleasure," replied both the gentlemen at once, both perhaps feeling equally well pleased at being thus permitted to slip off the scene, without being visited by any very vehement display of regret from any of their admiring friends.

During the time occupied by this abrupt discovery, Mr. Vincent and Bertha were very composedly conversing at the distance of about three yards from the rest of the party; and Mrs. Roberts having received the above-mentioned amiable acceptance of her invitation, turned about and walked towards Bertha and her cousin; which she would probably not have done, had not some feeling of embarrassment made her feel disposed to do something besides discoursing with Lord Lynberry and Mr. Montgomery on their approaching departure; for by gentle degrees she had learned to understand that it was better for all parties to let Bertha alone, the very slightest approach to interference with her freedom of

action being received, not with juvenile poutings, or any thing in the least degree resembling the rebellion of an ill-behaved, self-willed young girl, but with an air of quiet dignity that so obviously challenged her right of interference, as to make her feel that she had better not bring the question of authority or no authority under discussion. But now she ventured to break into the evidently confidential conversation of the cousins, and said, in her most polite and amiable manner,

“ I am so sorry to hear, my dear Mr. Vincent, that you are all going away ! I am sure I don't know what the Baths will do without you. You have all three been such an ornament. However, my dear sir, I hope you won't refuse what the other two gentlemen have granted, but that you will come this last evening to drink tea with us at the Balcony House.”

Whether invited or not, Mr. Vincent would undoubtedly have sat beside his cousin on that evening, till her usual early hour of retiring to rest ; he replied to Mrs. Roberts's invitation, however, very civilly, and declared that he should wait upon her with great pleasure. PLEASURE ! Poor young man ! Amidst all the violent emo-

tions awakened in the various bosoms of the party by the approaching separation, there were none—no, not even in the bosom of Bertha, that could approach in vehemence to those which wrung his heart. Bertha had a feeling at the bottom of hers, that she was fearfully independent of every one in the whole world. This feeling, which a short time ago had been one of very bitter misery, was now full of consolation. Her father had forfeited, had abandoned, all right to control her, he had thrown her off upon utter strangers, or rather he had thrown her altogether upon herself; but now she no longer felt abandoned and alone in the world. Heaven, in its mercy, seemed to have sent her as a protector the only relative she had whose name she had heard mentioned by her mother's lips with love and esteem; and the idea that she was to *lose* him by the separation which was now about to take place, was as foreign to her mind as to that of a child who sees its father take his hat and walk out of the house upon a matter of business. And thus, while the heart of Vincent was wrung with the doubt whether he ever should see his pretty Bertha more, she was pleasing herself with the anticipa-

tion of the exceeding pleasure she should feel when they should meet again, and with the thoughts of the perfectly new delight she should enjoy in writing to him and receiving his letters. In fact, of all the party about to be left in possession of the vaunted Balcony House, she was the only one who felt disposed to thank Heaven for having permitted her to enter it.

"I suppose we may walk on into the shrubberies, my dears," said Mrs. Roberts; "I don't think that it is any use waiting for the Princess Fuskymuskoff. She so seldom keeps any engagement of this kind, you know."

"I must beg you, ma'am, not to find any fault with the Princess Fuskymuskoff," said Agatha; "she is the friend I most value upon earth."

This was spoken *avec intention*, as the French call having a meaning for what they say, and was doubtless said for the purpose of causing a pang to the perfidious Montgomery. Whether he felt all that it was intended he should feel, might be more doubtful. However, he once more presented his arm, which was once more accepted; and the party moved on, every one of them, excepting Bertha, endeavouring to appear to feel either

more or less than they really did ; and not one of them, perhaps, excepting Bertha, being much deceived by the efforts thus made. But as for her, poor little girl ! she had no more idea of the deep and hopeless anguish which was wringing the heart of her companion, than of the fervent and unchangeable love that was nestling in her own. And next to Bertha, the least uncomfortable of the party, perhaps, was Mrs. Roberts, for she had great faith in the influence of leave-taking on the hearts and the lips of young gentlemen, when walking side by side with such girls as hers ; and, besides that, the moon was come round to the full again, and the balcony was as pleasant to sit in as ever. And who could tell what might happen yet, before it was time for every body to go home and go to bed ?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THIS last balcony hope proved as unsubstantial as the moonshine which had assisted its creation. The young ladies threw open the windows, and the young gentlemen, upon being invited so to do, walked through them, but a marvellous change had come over their spirits since the first evening on which the experiment was made. It is a disagreeable sort of fact to dwell upon, because it leads to all kinds of mortifying feelings concerning the prettiest part of the creation; but I pause upon it a moment solely for their sakes. I am not now going to moralise upon any deeper mischief than may arise from the idle wish of hearing

agreeable young gentlemen say agreeable things; for which purpose it is by no means very uncommon to see young ladies exercise a good deal of ingenuity, contriving little aside scenes, like those in the Baden balcony, both with a view to inspiring these agreeable things, and to affording a favourable opportunity for uttering them. I heartily wish that all pretty young ladies would believe me, when I assure them that they had much better let it alone. If the gentlemen they most wish to listen to have really any thing to say that is worth hearing, they will be quite sure to make an opportunity for themselves; and they will be—oh, a great many thousand times more likely to profit by this, than by any that can possibly be made for them. For the fact is, that the suspicious creatures are often exceedingly sharp-sighted on such occasions, and are as apt to take fright if they perceive any preparation for catching them, as a two years' old partridge when he hears the snap of a gun. Alas! it is painful to think how many a fair creature, having done all that her womanly wit could suggest, to ensure a good opportunity for the wished-for declaration, may have exclaimed, when remembering how

eagerly no opportunities at all have been seized, during the first early days of fresh flirtation, for uttering short abstracts, of what she was anxious to hear at full length,

“Nor time, nor place,
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both :
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you !”

It really is *very* painful ; and heartily glad should I be if I could succeed in persuading all young ladies, present and to come, that the very best thing they can do upon such occasions is to do nothing. But the Miss Robertses did not think so ; they both of them felt that these last moments were very precious, and, like their mamma, they thought also that they *might* be profitable ; and, therefore, not even when their wishes and their will had been the most steadfastly fixed on the acquisition of a new ball-dress, in the distressing times before drafts upon capital had been thought of, not even in those resolute and trying moments, had they ever more strenuously exerted themselves to obtain what they wished than they did now.

“I know not what ails me,” said Maria; “I feel as if this room had not air enough in it to permit my breathing. Oh, see how beautifully the moon is rising over those acacia-trees! Let us look at her once more.”

And, having opened the window with her own fair hand, she stepped forth into the balcony. Lord Lynberry followed, of course, but it was with a very different step from that with which he had formerly obeyed the same invitation.

“I should so like a chair, my Lord,” she resumed, after they had silently stood side by side for a minute or two; upon which his lordship returned into the room and brought one out to her. “And will not you sit down too?” she said, rather plaintively. “Are you afraid of the fresh air to-night?”

“Oh dear no! not the least in the world,” he replied, and as he spoke he walked to the very farthest extremity of the balcony, as if to prove that the fresh air might blow upon him as much as it liked. Maria sat still for about a minute and a half, with her eyes, which she knew were very handsome eyes, raised with a sort of softly reproaching expression to her friend the moon.

And what that friend thought of her and her eyes it is impossible to say, though she looked down upon her very steadily in return; but as for her other friend, for whom the attitude and the look were certainly in part intended, there was sad reason to suppose that he was not thinking of her at all, or which, perhaps, under the circumstances, was worse still, that he wished her to suppose so—for he had turned his head as decidedly as possible the other way, and appeared anxious to reconnoitre some object only visible by his leaning forward so as to look quite round the corner of the house. Maria saw it—saw it all, notwithstanding her stedfast contemplation of the moon, and she thought that there might be more ways than one for accounting for his “altered eye.” The glance, that took not half a second, sufficed to show her that there was something forced and artificial in the manner in which he looked away from her, and another half-second was long enough to give birth to a thought which explained it. It was his tutor who was taking him away. It was Vincent who was thus tearing them asunder, and it was doubtless some vehement remonstrance from the young man’s father which now induced him to

make these terrible, these supernatural efforts to avoid an explanation with her. A most bright and lively little family of new-born hopes were produced between the glance and the thought. Maria started from her chair, and followed him. As his lordship had reached the extreme boundary of the balcony, he could retreat no further ; and when Maria gently laid her hand upon his arm, heaving at the same time a profound sigh, he felt that there was nothing left for him but to take her hand in his, and to sigh too. This was quite as it should be, and Maria began to recover her "peace of mind," which a few minutes before she had had very serious thoughts of telling him he had destroyed for ever. But now she changed her purpose. Everything was perfectly intelligible. The poor dear fellow was suffering as much as she was, and not for worlds would she have uttered a word that might pain him !

"You will not forget us, Lord Lynberry, when you see the moon rise again, though over far distant scenes?" said she. "I will not think that you can forget us, when you know so very well that we can never forget you."

His young lordship was very tender-hearted ;

and though he thought all he had said about Miss Maria to his tutor, and perhaps a little more besides, he could not stand these gentle words unmoved; and, if the truth is to be told, his arm encircled her waist as he replied, "No, my dear Maria, it is quite impossible that I should ever forget the many happy hours I have passed with you."

Maria was moved to tears, and for a few moments could not speak; and so, as she stood perfectly still, his lordship's arm was not removed. And he, too, was silent; a circumstance which she interpreted, poor young lady! (as many other poor young ladies have done before her) in a way as far removed as was possible from the truth; for, whereas he was silent solely because he had nothing to say, she thought it was solely because he had too much—too much for his timidity—too much for the harsh command of his most noble but most cruel father, to permit his uttering. But this state of things could not go on for ever—they were both of them aware of this. So Maria began to sob; and Lord Lynberry, as if desperately determined to bring it to an end at once, caught her in his arms and kissed her. And then some

considerable time before it would have been possible for her to have summoned strength sufficient to extricate herself from his embrace, he relaxed his hold, and saying, in an accent of great alarm, "Take care, my dear girl, we are watched!" he hurried back to that portion of the balcony upon which the windows of the drawing-room threw a light. For Maria to follow at that moment, was totally out of the question. Her feelings quite overpowered her; and had she not seized hold of the iron railing, she must, she was quite sure, have fallen. Meanwhile, he entered the drawing-room in rather a hurried manner, a circumstance which Mrs. Roberts remarked with very particular satisfaction; and having extended his hand for a parting shake, he exclaimed, "Good bye, my dear Mrs. Roberts. It is very disagreeable to say good bye, isn't it? But there is no choice, is there?" and then adding, "Come along, Montgomery!" he ran out of the room and down the stairs in a way that left a great deal of hope behind him. The circumstance of his not taking leave of Agatha, who was still standing in the balcony with Montgomery, was thought by Mrs. Roberts to be quite decisive, and showed the poor young

man to be in a state of agitation, which left him without the power of knowing what he did. But here, too, there was room for more interpretations than one. That he *was* agitated is certain; but perhaps this might arise quite as much from his fear that he could not get away fast enough, as from any suffering arising from going away at all.

Meanwhile, Mr. Montgomery and Agatha were preparing themselves for the separation which had been announced, for which purpose they, too, had retreated to the balcony. The scene which ensued between them there, though having of necessity some general points of resemblance, differed a good deal from that which was passing between Maria and Lord Lynberry. In the first place, Mr. Montgomery's embarrassment—for he, too, certainly was embarrassed—was of a different nature from that of his young friend, and had in it a much larger mixture of self-reproach. Lord Lynberry knew that he had been guilty of insinuating, if not of absolutely declaring, a great deal more love for the young lady he was about to leave than he had ever felt; but his conscience was rendered pretty tolerably easy under this self-

accusation, by his conviction that the love he had given was of just about the same worth as that which he had received—the chief difference between them being, that her ultimate object was to make him marry her, and his to take care that she should not succeed ; so that, on the whole, he felt that when the leave-taking was, once for all, done and over, he should set off again, not only heart-whole, but pretty nearly self-acquitted of all blame.

But in the case of Mr. Montgomery, matters were different. In the first place, he knew that he had no right to make love at all, being affianced both in fact and in feeling ; and, moreover, he could not suspect, like Lord Lynberry, that the flattering partiality so frankly made visible by the lady proceeded from any hope on her part of obtaining an advantageous marriage by means of persuading him that he had gained her affections. He could not suspect this, because he had himself most distinctly informed her of his engagement. He felt, therefore, that whatever degree of partiality he had inspired, was quite disinterested, and therefore that he ought to be most particularly grateful. Yet somehow

or other, it was not so. On the contrary, he felt angry and provoked, both with her and with himself. Partly from vanity and partly in sport, he had permitted the sentimental friendship she had talked about to assume at least the appearance of love-making; and this it was which now made the easy and elegant-mannered Montgomery feel embarrassed.

But Miss Agatha Roberts was rapidly becoming one of those strongly-pronounced and independent characters, who make up their minds to "care for nothing," but to take that position in society which pleases them best, without doubting for a moment the power of their own talents to obtain it. Something of this sort Mr. Montgomery suspected. But he did not quite understand Miss Agatha. He did not fully understand her master-passion. She herself would have called it ambition; and such it was, perhaps, but of a very queer kind. Her ambition was to be what she called a woman of fashion, *coute qui coute*. For this end she had consented to smoke, though the doing so made her dreadfully sick. For this she preferred receiving the attentions of the engaged Montgomery

to those of any other man at the Baths, however free—for Montgomery was a man of fashion. She had been shocked a good deal at first hearing of his sudden departure ; but, the brain being a tougher organ than the heart, she came to this farewell conference in the balcony, without any intention of being pathetic. Mr. Montgomery soon perceived this ; and it was so great a relief to him, that all his embarrassed feelings disappeared, and with them a good deal of the contempt he had felt both for himself and her. So that, excepting for the fact that no one was looking on to witness the flattering intimacy with which he treated her, this parting interview was as gratifying to her feelings as any she had ever had with him.

“ I shall miss you terribly, my dear friend ! ” said she, in very much the tone in which a French marquise, of Louis le Grand’s day, might have addressed one of her *cortège* of lovers, when sending him off upon a campaign ; “ but depend upon it I shall not forget you—nor can I hope to meet with many friends in future so well calculated to make the idle hours of life pass pleasantly.”

"You are too kind, my dear Miss Roberts," he replied.

"Nay, call me Agatha," said she. "You have often done so, you know, and I like it. It is a sort of landmark or mile-stone in the journey towards friendship. And indeed, Montgomery, you must let me class you as a friend."

"You cannot, I am sure, doubt my wish to do so," he said, but with rather less warmth than she expected; for she knew that she was letting him off very easily, considering all their philanderings, and she thought the least he could do was to declare himself her faithful friend for life. But, in fact, the notion of Lady Charlotte's being present at some future day, when the charming Agatha, with her outrageous ringlets, her prodigiously puffed petticoats, and her three-quarters *décolletés* morning dresses, might seize upon him with the licensed grasp of eternal friendship, came across him at that moment with something like a shudder. However, her rejoinder gave him courage, and during the remainder of the interview he was very affectionate.

"Alas!" said she, it is grievous to think how very little chance there is that we should speedily

meet again. You will be returning to England to fulfil your engagement. And as for us, Heaven only knows where we shall be ! The whole race, you know, look up to me ; and, as I know I shall guide their movements, whether I intend it or not, I think it not unlikely that we may visit every court in Europe before we return to our English residence."

" Such unlimited power of locomotion is very enviable, my dear Agatha," he replied, rejoicing exceedingly at the enlarged sphere of action she was proposing for herself ; " and if I am doomed, as I think I may be, to parliamentary shackles after I marry, I must console myself with thinking of my fair friend's more extended field of enjoyment."

" Do so, Montgomery ; and you may think, too, that in all her wanderings she will never have forgotten you. And *à propos* of that, my dear friend, I hope you will sometimes let me know that you have not forgotten me—not that I mean to propose *une correspondance suivée* with a man who is about to marry a woman I don't know—I am too discreet to think of it, I assure you. If she were a particular friend of my own, it

would be different—but as it is, the thing is quite out of the question. You shall never have cause to fear my discretion, Montgomery. What I mean to ask of you is, that you will give me—give *us*, I mean, of course—introductions to any people of real high fashion that you may know upon the Continent. What I am chiefly anxious for is, to increase my acquaintance with foreigners of distinction, wherever I may happen to be. Such a friend as the Princess Fuskymuskoff is invaluable! As to introductions to English ladies, unless they are persons of really high rank and fashion, and who have got a little out of the musty-fusty humdrum of our odious country, I will not trouble you by asking for any introductions to them. But I shall be obliged—we shall all of us be really very much obliged—if you would present to us, by letter, any young men of fashion and fortune whom you may happen to hear of setting off upon a continental excursion. I need not tell *you*, my dear friend,” she continued, “that I say this with no missish view to forming matrimonial connexions. I detest the idea! I declare to you that, for myself, I care not a straw whether I marry or not. I cannot endure the idea of mak-

ing marriage the most important business of life. We all know that the majority of men and women do marry, and therefore, of course, the chances are that we shall do so, like the rest of the world—but as for fixing one's thoughts eternally upon it, I neither will nor can do it."

Mr. Montgomery assured her that he thought she was perfectly right; but there was something of vagueness both in his eyes and his accent as he said this, which left his fair companion in doubt as to what he meant. She looked at him, as in the days that were gone, with a prodigious deal of mysterious sentiment, stealing, as it were, from her eyes to his.

"Ah! Montgomery! I should like to know what you are thinking of at this moment!" said she. Upon which, strange to say, Mr. Montgomery actually blushed, or in more fitting phrase, he coloured—for his thoughts at that moment were wholly and solely occupied upon the question of how soon he could decently go away, and retreat to his lodgings and his bed—for he had been busy all day, and was heartily tired; not to mention, that of all things in this mortal life, there was not one which he considered to be so dull,

stale, and utterly unprofitable, as the unmeaning fag-end of an unmeaning flirtation. Nevertheless, he roused himself to the performance of the tiresome task which his folly had brought upon him, and said, looking as handsome and melancholy as possible, "My thoughts, my dear friend, were occupied upon the detestable necessity of saying adieu. But alas! it must be done."

"Not till you have promised to do what I have asked," said Agatha, who in truth was thinking on her side much more of her future career than of the present parting. "Will you not, my dear friend, promise to give me this proof of the sincerity of your affectionate regard? I really feel that I deserve it, Montgomery; for nothing can have been less selfish, or more sincere, than my conduct and my sentiments towards you."

This was said in a very imposing manner; and it did impose in one sense, though not in another; that is to say, it influenced, but did not cheat him. It would indeed have required a monstrous deal of eloquence to persuade him that the fine clear bold eye that was now raised to his face,

expressed any sentiment in the most distant degree allied to disinterested affection of any kind. Few men understand the characters of the ladies with whom they flirt, so nearly as Mr. Montgomery did that of Agatha Roberts. He was perfectly aware that she was a cold-hearted, calculating, ambitious schemer, with vanity enough to desire greatly, nay, passionately, a distinguished place in society, and shrewdness enough to perceive that she had no chance of obtaining it in the ordinary way, and must therefore arm herself for the enterprise by a stedfast resolution that nothing should stop her, and a confident hope that if she could not get on in one way she might in another. Her pretence of simple-minded friendship, therefore, he valued exactly at its proper worth; but nevertheless he did remember that, such as she was, he had condescended to select her constantly as his partner in the dance, as his companion on the promenade, and, in short, as the object of all the attentions which he had made it his amusement to pay during the banishment to which he had been condemned; while her present lofty tone reminded him also of the obvious fact, to which indeed it was her especial

object to allude—namely, that the generality of young ladies, under similar circumstances, would have tormented him with insinuations that he had used them ill. He at once determined therefore to comply with her request, to which perhaps he was the more inclined by perceiving that the doing so might be made the means of bringing this parting interview to an immediate conclusion.

“Most willingly do I promise what you ask, my dear friend,” he replied, “and I am very glad you have thought of naming it before it was too late to prove immediately my wish to obey you. Heaven only knows where I may be, or what may become of me, nor even how soon I may be recalled—I mean, how soon I may be obliged to go back to England. The only way therefore in which, as it strikes me, I can be really useful to you, is by going home immediately, and writing half a dozen letters or so before I go to bed, to various friends of mine, who I know are at this time amusing themselves by wandering about the continent. You will be sure to meet them somewhere or other; and I am sure they would all be delighted to make your acquaintance.”

“Thank you, my friend,” replied Agatha, in the tone of one who receives what he knows is his due, but who condescends, nevertheless, to express gratitude for it. “I thank you, dear Montgomery,” she resumed, “but remember that I do so in the belief that your letters will be addressed only to such persons as I should wish to know. You understand me. I certainly shall not thank you if you put me in the way of being disgusted with the society of Englishmen who are not of high rank, or who have not thrown off their detestable national stiffness.”

It was at this moment that Lynberry, rushing through the drawing-room, had exclaimed, “Come along, Montgomery!” whereupon the gentleman so addressed eagerly replied to Agatha’s last speech by declaring that he understood her perfectly, and would take care to give her no introductions but such as she would wish to have.

“But, my dear friend,” he added, “if I am to write at all, I must go directly. God bless you, dear Agatha!” and gallantly saluting the tips of her fingers, he too rushed through the window into the drawing-room, where, with all his usual irreproachable perfection of manner, he offered

his hand to Mrs. Roberts, who seized upon it with a grasp that under other circumstances might have been mistaken for a hostile and resolute method of detention, but it was now clearly understood by Mr. Montgomery to be only a mark of strong affection, strongly expressed.

While this grasp still lasted, he uttered an elegant phrase or two, upon his regret at quitting Baden while so charming a family as hers remained in it, and then tore his hand away with the appearance of considerable emotion—and vanished.

CHAPTER XIX.

ALTHOUGH each one of the Roberts female trio had very resolutely made up her mind not to betray the slightest symptom of disappointment or surprise at the sudden departure of the gentlemen whose presence had shed a brightness so much beyond that of ordinary German sunshine upon Baden-Baden, they certainly did look, in spite of all they could do to prevent it, rather blankly on each other, as they met in a sort of triangle, face to face, when the two daughters entered by the two windows, and met their mother, who was coming forward to advise them not to catch cold, but to come in directly.

“Well! I am sure,” began Mrs Roberts in gentle accents, which seemed to promise a good deal of lamentation.

“I shall go to bed!” said Maria, rather abruptly, “for I am tired to death.”

“Do, my dear, do,” replied her mother; “it will do you good—more good than any thing, take my word for it; and I will send you a little good strong white wine whey, my dear, and then perhaps you will get to sleep, love.”

Maria felt a little angry, but still more pathetic; and feeling that if she remained she should certainly begin crying, which she particularly wished to avoid, she hurried out of the room. But as she was passing through the door, the idea of the white wine whey seemed to comfort her, and she half turned round and said, “If you please, ma’am; thank you.”

Mrs. Roberts rang the bell and gave the necessary orders—that is to say, she desired that “*une pint du lait*” should immediately be put upon the kitchen fire, adding that she would “*descendre en point de tout de tems pour faire ce que était necessaire.*” And then, the servant having departed, poor Mrs. Roberts hoped to indulge herself in a

little consultation with her eldest daughter, upon recent events and the present state of their affairs; and was beginning with her usual phrase, "Well, Agatha," when that young lady abruptly stopped her short by saying, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but at this moment I really cannot listen to you, for—"

"Oh! my dear girl," replied the tender mother, interrupting in her turn, "don't say a word about it; I don't feel in the least offended. It is so natural, my poor dear child, that you should wish to be quite quiet after it all. We will talk it all over to-morrow, Agatha. Would you like, my dear, to have a little whey brought you, like Maria? A pint of milk will make plenty for you both, and I am sure it would do you good, Agatha."

"Mercy on me, ma'am! I trust you are not going to treat me as if I were a love-lorn girl like Maria. If she chooses to fall sick about every man she meets in society, she must do it: I am sure I shall never interfere to prevent it. And you may give her whey, if you like, with plenty of sugar and spice to comfort her. My scheme of existence is a different one. I flatter myself I

shall never give you any trouble about my love affairs; and in return I must request, ma'am, that you never torment me about any of the persons, either male or female, to whom I may happen to attach myself. I am quite willing to pledge you my word that my family shall never be exposed to the danger of any low associations on my account; and, moreover, that if it should ever happen that I found myself likely to be induced to form a matrimonial engagement, I would give you and the rest of my family timely notice of it. And now, ma'am, I won't detain you from Maria and her whey any longer; but I should think you had better advise her not to *promener* her woe too publicly. There are a good many pleasant people still left at the baths, whatever she may think of it, and I should be sorry to see her wipe her eyes upon them all. For my part I shall console myself by putting on my cloak and smoking a cigarette in the balcony."

The young lady, as she uttered these words, passed by her mother to seek the luxury she spoke of, and Mrs. Roberts looked after her with mingled pride and admiration.

"Well! thank Heaven!" she fervently ex-

claimed, "my unceasing efforts for the good of my family have not all been thrown away. That dear girl will repay them all! What a mind!—what manners!—what a walk she has! That is a daughter that any woman might be proud of; and I have no more doubt of her making a splendid marriage, than that I stand here. But she must set about it in her own way, that's plain enough—and so she shall, dear creature! Such a girl as that is not to be treated like an everyday miss, who would rather catch up the first penniless 'prentice she could find, than not be married at all. I wish that poor dear Maria had some of her admirable strength of mind! I should not be obliged to go broiling over the kitchen-fire if she had!"

But notwithstanding this somewhat harsh-sounding reflection, Mrs. Roberts performed the maternal office of comforter so effectually, that Maria speedily fell asleep, the last words she uttered as she closed her eyes being, "Good night, mamma! We will talk it all over to-morrow."

And when the morrow came, it found Mrs. Roberts early awake, and anxiously awaiting the moment for Maria to be awake too; for these part-

ing words had sent her to bed with the delightful conviction that, after all, there was something to tell; "and if there is," she murmured, as she cheerily rubbed her rosy hands after washing them, "and if there is, let it be as little as it will, I shall know how to make the most of it." But it was in vain that the anxious mother lingered on the outside of the breakfast-room, determined that, the moment Maria approached it, she would take her to some quiet corner, and hear all she had got to say before she met the rest of the family, however much they might clamour for their breakfast. But not all her watchfulness nor all her patience availed to obtain her object; sorrow and white wine whey combined, caused Maria to sleep much later than usual; and when at last she did make up her mind to leave her bed, there was a sort of sullen languor in all her movements, which rendered the business of dressing too long for the patience of poor Mr. Roberts to hold out; and when he exclaimed, in a tolerably loud tone of voice, "I don't want the rest of ye to have any breakfast if you don't like it, but I must and will have my coffee directly," the disappointed mother gave way, and took her place

at the table in a state of the most torturing uncertainty. Nor when at length, quite at the conclusion of the meal, Maria entered, and took her usual seat, could the acute maternal eye discern any symptom by which she might guess whether the "*all*" that was to be talked over contained a history of weal or woe. There were certainly no traces of tears, neither were there any traces of smiles—nor did any glance betray a broken spirit or a broken heart. On the contrary, indeed, if anything could be read distinctly on her pretty face, it was something quite the reverse of despair; and yet it was not quite the glance of hope, either, but rather a stedfast wilfulness that seemed prepared to overcome all obstacles that might stand in its way. And this was a sort of expression which would certainly have been hailed as favourable by Mrs. Roberts, had it not been accompanied by an air of sulkiness that she did not quite understand. Luckily, however, she was not doomed to endure the torture of uncertainty much longer—the silent breakfast ended, Mr. Roberts and his son walked off, and Miss Harrington retired to her room.

"Now then, my dearest Maria! The time is

came, isn't it, for us to talk it all over, as you promised me last night? You will not put it off any longer will you, dear love? What is it that you have got to tell me, my darling Maria?"

"I have very little to tell you, ma'am, as to the past, but there is a good deal that I wish to say about the future. How soon, ma'am, do you think of leaving Baden-Baden?"

"How soon? I have never begun thinking, as yet, about leaving it at all—I don't mean, of course, that I have any notion of staying here for ever. It does not seem to me as if any people of fashion really lived here; but every thing has been going on so very pleasantly till just now, that I never turned a thought towards going away; and besides, you know, we have engaged the house for ever so long, and we must stay till our time is up."

"I see no sort of necessity for that, ma'am, said Agatha. "It would be a monstrous bore indeed, if people were obliged to stay in a house whether they liked it or not, merely because they had taken it. It would be positively turning one's house into a gaol."

“But what is one to do, Agatha?” said Mrs. Roberts, looking greatly dismayed. “You know as well as I do that we pushed things pretty far, when we took such an expensive house; and just think what your father would say if we were to go away and leave it before our time was up, having to pay for it, of course, all the same. What do you think he would say to it, Agatha?”

“Upon my word, ma’am, it would be a great deal too much for my nerves if I were obliged to divine what my father would say upon that or any other subject that was proposed for his consideration; but, fortunately, we have the comfort of knowing that it does not signify what he says. I am happy to say, ma’am, that you have too much *savoir faire* to suffer yourself and your family to be led about blindfold by any old gentleman in existence.”

Mrs. Roberts was evidently a good deal touched by this compliment, but she looked a little frightened too; and after she had nodded and smiled, to show she was not at all angry—a liberty indeed which she had quite ceased to take with her eldest daughter—she said, “But what would you propose to do about the house, my dear Agatha, if you

had the management of it all quite in your own hands? You don't mean that you would go and hire some other house, and still be obliged to go on paying for this all the time? You don't mean that, I suppose, do you?"

"Really, ma'am, if I had to manage the business, I should consider a few weeks' rent of such a little place as this, as a matter of very little consequence. I dare say the house might be very easily disposed of, if that were all. If it suited my convenience to leave the house, I should leave it. The first object for every rational creature being, of course, the placing themselves exactly where they would best like to be; and having decided upon going, if such were my pleasure, I should next take measures to dispose of the house for the remainder of the time for which we have taken it; but as to sitting down in it to keep watch over the goods and chattels, I should as soon think of proclaiming myself a pauper and going into the poor-house at once."

"You need not say so much about it, Agatha. It is not at all likely that mamma means to do any such thing," said Maria.

"I assure you, Maria, I have no idea that

she has any such absurdity in her thoughts. I merely answered a question, you know," replied Agatha.

"Don't let us talk any more about the house now, girls," said Mrs. Roberts, coaxingly. "I am positively dying to hear what dear Maria has to tell me about what passed last night."

"Impossible, ma'am," replied Maria, casting down her eyes, and appearing to be in some confusion. "It is quite out of the question, I do assure you. If you would give me the whole world, I am certain I could never bring myself to describe to you every particular of what passed last night."

"I am sure, my dearest love, I would not ask you to enter more into particulars than was pleasant to you, for any thing that could be offered to me. I have a great deal too much respect for your feelings, Maria, to do any such thing," said Mrs. Roberts; "but you may easily guess, my dear, how excessively anxious I am to hear the upshot of what passed between you and Lord Lynberry last night; because, of course, one must consider *that* to be pretty nearly decisive, you know."

“ I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I know no such thing,” replied Maria.

“ Then he did not say any thing to you at all, Maria?” said her mother, looking most deplorably disappointed.

“ What can you mean, ma'am?” replied her daughter, knitting her brows a little in the style of her elder sister. “ What can you mean, ma'am, by saying that he did not say any thing to me at all? Gracious Heaven! as if the recollection of such an interview was not agitating enough, without the torture of being told that he said nothing ! ”

“ How foolish it is of you, Maria,” returned the puzzled parent, “ to fancy I meant to say that he actually said *nothing*. No, no, Maria, I am not so old, my dear, but that I know better than that. What I meant to ask, Maria, was whether he said *any* thing at all approaching to an offer of marriage? Do give me a straightforward answer to this question, my dear, will you?”

“ I really do suppose, ma'am, that you are the first person in the world who ever did ask for a straightforward answer upon such a sub-

ject!" exclaimed Maria, vehemently, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven. "Straight-forward, ma'am? Gracious Heaven! what a phrase!"

"Indeed, ma'am, I must say that I think you press Maria very unkindly. I quite agree with her in believing that you are the only person in world, who ever would have thought of using such such a form of interrogatory on such a subject," said Agatha. "I really think that under the circumstances the only fair question would be, whether he has given her reason to believe that he is still attached to her."

"Well then, Maria, let me ask you that, will you?" said her mother. "Tell me, my dear, did he give you reason to believe that he was still attached to you?"

Maria gave her mother a look, that seemed intended to say a great deal, though Mrs. Roberts could not tell what; and then spreading her two hands over her face, she exclaimed,

"Oh heavens! Yes!"

"Then, my dear child, I feel satisfied," replied Mrs. Roberts, "perfectly satisfied, Maria. I would rather have preferred, certainly—I will not

deny it—I would rather have preferred his declaring his intentions to me or to your father before he left the place—I certainly should have preferred it—but it is impossible, I know, to have every thing just exactly as we would wish; and thankful I am, and thankful I will be, at the constancy of his passion. But yet, my dear girls, don't you think yourselves, that there *is* something very odd in his going away so abruptly, without giving me the very least hint in the world that there was any chance of our ever meeting again? Now don't fancy, my dear Maria, that I doubt your word. On the contrary, my dear love, I feel perfectly sure and certain that you feel convinced of his tender attachment, but — ”

“There is no *but* about it, ma'am,” said Maria, interrupting her; “I am not such a baby but that I know how a man behaves when he loves a woman. And I do beg that I may not be plagued any more about it.”

“I am sure, Maria, any notion of plaguing you is the farthest thing from my thoughts. I am quite sensible, my poor dear child, that the more you are convinced of his love, the more the

parting must be painful—one must have the heart of a tiger to plague you just at this time—so don't you take any notice of what we are talking about, but I should just like to ask Agatha what *she* thinks. You have a monstrous deal of observation, Agatha—nobody can deny that—and I wish you would tell me now, quite confidentially, as one friend might speak to another, what do you think about it?"

"About what, ma'am?" said Agatha, raising her eyebrows.

"About Lord Lynberry, my dear. Do you think, from what you have seen yourself, and from what you have heard your sister now say, that we may expect his lordship to propose for her? Now speak plain and clear, Agatha, and let me understand you," returned her mother.

"Upon my word, ma'am," replied Agatha, "you have desired me to do the most difficult thing in the world. How can any one speak *plain* and *clear*, as you call it, upon a subject so notoriously intricate as the heart of man? Besides, I really must be excused from passing any judgment on the question. Nobody, in fact, can do this but Maria herself—for you must be aware, ma'am,

that the very truest love is often that which conceals itself the most carefully from the public eye. But though I will not pronounce a judgment, I may give an opinion, and that opinion is, that, in examining this matter, you should take care to keep in mind the rank and station of the young nobleman in question. It is obvious to common sense, that we are not to expect precisely the same straightforward conduct from him that might be looked for from a person exactly in our own station. Don't mistake me, however; I use this phrase solely with reference to the old gentleman his father, who having, unluckily for him, been born in the last century, has conceived himself, and possibly given to his son, or at least attempted to do so, some of those old-fashioned prejudices which make station depend rather on birth and fortune than on fashion. We know better, I hope; we know that once admitted within the magic circle of *TON*, every thing else is forgotten. That, of course, as far as society is concerned, is all that is looked for—is all that is at all important. But in affairs of marriage, I am afraid these noblemen of the old school are still apt to make a ridiculous fuss about birth and connexion. *Nous autres* may

laugh at all this, for we know how utterly absurd it is; and it is probable, from the choice he has made, that poor dear Lynberry knows it too. But this, you will observe, may not be sufficient to prevent his having some trouble with his father. I should not be at all surprised if he had a good deal."

"Yes!" cried Maria, clasping her hands and lifting her eyes to heaven. "Yes! that should account for every thing! In fact, it *does* explain every thing, and makes, what otherwise *might* be puzzling, as clear as light! And therefore, mamma, I hope and trust that you will not let any nonsense on papa's part prevent your doing what you ought to do. Remember that the happiness of my whole life depends upon it; and if you refuse, I am doomed to misery—or rather let me say, to DEATH! Yes, mamma, to an early tomb! For I know and feel that I have not strength to survive it!"

"Survive what, my dear?" exclaimed Mrs. Roberts. "What is it that you say will send you to an early tomb? Oh! Maria! how very shockingly you do talk!"

"What is *talk*, mamma? What is talk compared to action? If you do not do your duty by

me now, you will have to weep over my early grave!"

"But what *is* my duty, Maria? For Heaven's sake explain yourself! You terrify me to death, and then won't even tell me what you want me to do."

"You shan't have reason to complain of that long, mamma, for I have not the least objection to telling you what I want you to do; for I know it is reasonable, and I know it is right. All I ask is, that you should immediately take measures to leave this hateful place, and follow Lord Lynberry to Rome. I am quite sure that in his heart he expects that we should do so, though he was too delicate to say so. *He* is obliged to go, poor fellow! for such are the orders of his tyrannic father; but I, thank Heaven, am free—Lynberry knows this, and therefore must of course expect that I should follow him."

"Follow him, my dear!" said Mrs. Roberts, relapsing for a moment into the *rococo* decencies of her former mode of life. "I know very well that, as Agatha says, things are not exactly as they used to be. But still, somehow, I do think the notion of all setting off and following this young gentleman to Rome, has something very queer in it."

“Queer!” cried Maria, with violent emotion, “what a word to use at such a moment! My life is hanging upon a thread, and you call it queer.”

“Upon my word, ma’am, I must say that I think you are very unfeeling,” said Agatha. “If you choose to refuse the perfectly reasonable request of Maria, you certainly might do so without making a joke of it. I see plainly that it is likely enough that her happiness, poor girl! may be sacrificed to your detestable old-fashioned notions; but at any rate there is no need to add insult to tyranny.”

“How you do run on, Agatha!” exclaimed her mother, looking as angry as she dared. “You know perfectly well that I am as far from wishing to part Maria and Lynberry as you can be. And if you can explain away the oddness of our all setting off after him the moment he is gone, I shall be very glad to listen to you. There! I am sure I can’t say any thing fairer than that, can I?”

“I don’t see any great fairness in it, ma’am,” replied her eldest daughter. “It is putting a monstrous bore upon me, if I am to do battle with all your windmills. You really should not have brought us abroad at all, ma’am, if you were

conscious of not having strength of mind sufficient to overcome the ridiculous prejudices to which you have been accustomed at home. I confess, indeed, that I am a good deal disappointed at hearing you speak in this manner; for though, of course, we all know that your education, like that of every other woman brought up in England, must have placed you a thousand leagues behind those who have had the advantage of visiting the Continent in youth, yet still I flattered myself that you had sufficient quickness of observation to enable you to get rid of all such nonsense."

"And so I have, Agatha," said Mrs. Roberts, bridling with conscious ability, "and you would soon perceive that you were perfectly right in thinking so, if you would but have a little patience. But it is not fair, my dear, to expect that every body should be as quick as yourself. But let us talk a little soberly and reasonably about all this. You hurry on so, that I declare I hardly know what it is you do want. Do you mean, both of you, that you think we ought to give up this expensive house, that we stand engaged to pay for during the whole of the summer—do you

really mean that we ought to give this up directly, and set off to Rome after Lord Lynberry?"

"I don't know what you mean, ma'am, by going *after* Lord Lynberry. As he is gone already, we *must* go after him, if we ever intend to go to Rome at all. But not to quarrel with phrases," pursued Agatha, assuming great dignity of manner, "not to quarrel with phrases, but to come with equal courage and sincerity to the real question at once, I do think that if Maria feels persuaded that Lord Lynberry has left Baden-Baden by the desire of his father, and that, notwithstanding his doing so, he is still attached to her, in that case I certainly do think that it is your duty, ma'am, to bring them together again, and that with as little delay as possible."

"Well, Agatha," replied her mother, "I suppose you are right, for certainly, according to the old system of things, it *was* hardly reasonable to suppose that Lord Southtown would approve of the match just at first. But then, my dear girls, I must say that I think the question of our going or not going, ought to depend very much upon what *has* passed between Maria and Lord Lynberry. Nobody can know this, you know, but

her own dear self; and though I am sure I would be the last person in the world to insist upon a poor dear blushing girl telling every thing that had passed between herself and her lover, yet I do think that, under the circumstances, Maria ought to be a little open with us. Don't you think so, Agatha?"

"Why yes, ma'am, I confess I think there is a good deal of reason in what you say," replied Agatha. "The giving up the house, Maria, certainly ought not to be done without some good reason for it. You need not tell every thing, dear; but if he either said or did any thing which proved that he left you with the sentiments and emotions of a lover, I really think that you ought to confess it to mamma; and if you do not, she must certainly be held excusable if she refuses to set off for Rome."

"Well then, ma'am," replied Maria, with a good deal of indignation naturally arising from the force thus put upon her delicacy, "well then, ma'am, he took me in his arms and kissed me! I don't know what more you would have!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE reflective reader will not have found it difficult to forestall the result of the conversation between Mrs. Roberts and her daughters, which was detailed in the last chapter. The persuasive eloquence of Maria was certainly felt the more strongly, because Mrs. Roberts herself had become heartily sick of Baden-Baden; and much as that fond parent admired the great mental powers of her eldest daughter, she might not have yielded so readily to her spirited reasoning on the subject of the house, had not one or two little circumstances led her very ardently to wish that the whole edifice, balcony and all, had been sunk in

the Red Sea before the moment at which she entered it.

It would be useless to follow the progress of her tacit reasonings, up to the moment that her bold final resolution was taken; it is enough to say that Mr. Roberts was made to understand that there was no use in saying anything more upon the subject, for that good sense and proper feeling imperiously demanded their immediate departure. Mrs. Roberts, doubtless from an impulse of female delicacy, did not deem it necessary to state the conclusive anecdote of the kiss to her husband; but by thus resting her argument upon the general ground of good sense and proper feeling, left him no excuse whatever for making himself troublesome by useless opposition. And so Mr. Roberts desired that she would please to do whatever she thought best.

It was therefore within a very short time indeed after the departure of Lord Lynberry and his companions from Baden-Baden, that Mrs. Roberts and the three young ladies might once again have been seen, hanging each over a travelling trunk, laboriously employed in depositing within it rather more than it could conveniently contain.

Edward considered himself as one of the most accomplished packers in Europe, and never suffered any one to touch his portmanteau but himself; and poor Mr. Roberts, too, upon all former occasions had rather ostentatiously displayed his power of being useful; but now all packing energy seemed dead within him. In truth, a very important moral revolution was very rapidly taking place in Mr. Roberts. When he first listened to his wife's arguments respecting the great advantages to be obtained by exchanging his sober home in England—for he knew not very well what, upon the continent—he most sincerely believed her to be one of the very cleverest women and very best managers that ever was born; but, as 'it turned out, poor man! he was as the reader must be by this time aware, any thing but "blest in so believing." Nevertheless it was long, surprisingly long, before he began even to guess that it was possible he might have been mistaken. Nay, even when a vague doubt timidly occurred to him, suggested by meditating on the very puzzling novelties of all kinds upon which they were thrown, it led him no further towards doubting his wife's great financial capacity, than just think-

ing that she did not seem to be quite so clear in her accounts in Paris as in London. But then came the great master-stroke of obtaining Miss Harrington as an inmate, and this for a long time sufficed to set everything like pecuniary alarm at defiance; nor did even the splendour of the Balcony House, or the startling innovation of a carriage for the whole summer, occasion him any lasting alarm; but when he heard the admired wife of his bosom lay it down as a law, as peremptory as it was new, that upon every occasion where money was greatly wanted, the capital of his little fortune was to be drawn upon to supply the want, he really felt as if the solid earth was in the act of melting away from under his feet.

But if the long confirmed habit of implicit trust was shaken by this, that of conjugal obedience was not; and the terrified but compliant gentleman yielded to the demand made for his signature, in the manner that has been related; yet there was no habit strong enough to keep him from feeling a very new and very disagreeable sensation of doubt, as to what was to happen next. Wonders had followed so quickly on each other, that all conjectures as to what was, or what was not

likely to occur to him and his race, were set completely at defiance ; and the poor man felt as if he were rolling head over heels in an atmosphere of clouds, athwart which, indeed, occasionally shot beams of exceeding brightness ; and coronets, and bleeding hearts, and parks, and palaces, and sons-in-law and a daughter-in-law, all became visible in succession ; yet the rolling-over-and-over sensation which accompanied it all, made him exceedingly uncomfortable, and acting like a sort of mental sea-sickness, left him languidly and despondingly unable to help himself.

“What does make papa stand looking so like a fool?” said Agatha. “He seems to grow more stupid and helpless every day.”

“My dear Agatha,” replied her mother, suddenly pausing in the very act of locking her own particular trunk, “my dear Agatha, you know that my most anxious wish has always been to bring up my children in habits of respect to their father ; and that way of speaking is not at all pretty, my dear. Your poor dear papa is *not* so young as he has been—I won’t deny that, Agatha ; but you and your brother and sister have a great deal to be thankful for, I promise you. It is not

every man, who, as he feels himself growing old, has the good sense to make up his mind to let his wife manage every thing for him. Some old gentlemen are dreadfully obstinate, I can tell you, and most abominably troublesome, which is what we really have none of us a right to say of your poor dear father. So don't let me hear you speak in that sort of way again, my dear."

Miss Agatha turned on her heel, and screwed up one eye with a merry expression, which was perfectly intelligible to her sister, for whose advantage the grimace was performed; but Mrs. Roberts saw it not, and returned to the occupation she had suspended while uttering her pious lecture, with the noble self-approving satisfaction of a Roman pattern matron, who knows that she has done her duty.

It was fortunate for Mrs. Roberts that she had so fully established her new system of drawing upon capital, before all her Baden-Baden bills came in upon her, or she might have been a little dismayed, and a good deal puzzled, as to the means of paying them.

"Mercy on me, mamma, have you got all those bills to pay before we start?" exclaimed Agatha,

upon entering the room, where the painstaking lady was laboriously engaged in endeavouring to ascertain the sum total. "Why, what on earth will you do for money?"

"I never saw such a place as this in the whole course of my life!" replied her mother. "The people must be the very greatest cheats upon earth. I give you my word of honour, Agatha, that there is not a single bill here that I can be said to have forgotten. I have always taken the greatest care to keep in my head a general idea of every thing that was owing; but who in the world can undertake to say that these abominable tradespeople have not put down lots and lots of things that we have never had? and then they write and spell in such a way! I am sure I can't read one quarter of the words in any bill here. All I know is, that from first to last, I have managed every thing with the very greatest economy; but certainly these bills will make a dreadful hole in the sum I have made your father draw for."

"I should think so, ma'am," returned Agatha, raising her eyebrows, and opening her handsome eyes rather more widely than usual.

“I tell you what, Agatha, I want you to talk a little common sense to Edward for me ; he will be more likely to listen to you than to me. He is one of the finest creatures, I know, that ever lived, and I am as proud of him as I ought to be. Nothing can be more manly and spirited than all his notions about Bertha, and I have no doubt in the world that he will manage matters in that quarter perfectly well at last ; but the fact is, Agatha, that he is wasting time. When one sees such a sight as this,” she continued, pointing to the sinister and threatening-looking folios which covered the table, “when one sees such a sight as this, Agatha, it is impossible to help feeling, that the sooner Miss Bertha Harrington is turned into Mrs. Edward Roberts, the better.”

“Edward is a good, clever fellow, I know that quite as well as you do, ma’am ; but in the first place, I suspect that he is just at present at the feet of another woman, and in the next, I greatly doubt if Miss Bertha has the least inclination to see him at hers.”

Mrs. Roberts looked up into the face of her daughter with a rather mysterious sort of smile.

“You have never had any confidential conver-

sation with your brother, have you, my dear, upon the subject of Bertha Harrington?"

"Confidential, ma'am? I don't exactly know what you mean by confidential—he never talks very much about her in any way," replied Agatha; "but he has certainly confessed to me that he dislikes her more than any girl he ever saw in his life."

Mrs. Roberts again smiled mysteriously.

"All that, you know, and Edward knows too, as well as we do, Agatha, has nothing to do with his object in selecting her for his wife," replied Mrs. Roberts, very much with the same accent and manner that a queen mother might have employed, when speaking diplomatically of the espousals of her royal son. "I have taken no notice whatever," she resumed, "of his little flirtation with that pretty-looking Madame de Marquemont. I know that it never answers to plague men about those sort of things. When he is married I dare say he will be quite as steady as other men of fashion, and I really don't see that one has any right to ask more. Young men will be young men, that's the fact, and not all the mothers in the world can prevent it."

"You are quite right there, ma'am," replied her daughter, "but still, under all the circumstances, I should be better pleased if I thought Edward was rather more certain of getting Bertha Harrington. Her fortune, and the connexion too, would unquestionably be very advantageous."

"He is quite aware of it, my dear," returned her mother, with another smile; "but I have promised to keep his secret. If you really feel uneasy about it, Agatha, you had better manage to get a little private and quite unreserved conversation with him; he would soon set your heart at rest, I'll answer for it. And if you *do* set him talking on the subject, my dear girl, urge him not to lose time. Look there," she added, pointing to the bills, "and that will inspire you with eloquence on the subject."

Agatha was too busy at that moment to seek the *tête-à-tête* her mother recommended, but her curiosity was awakened, and she determined to find an early opportunity for gratifying it.

CHAPTER XXI.

MEANTIME, Mr. Edward Roberts himself was not altogether without what the immortal Major Sturgeon was wont to call his "little fracasces." His tender friendship for Madame de Marquemont had reached its climax. And we all know that everything which grows, even an oak-tree, having once attained its highest point of strength and perfection, begins to decline. This process is in oak-trees a very slow one, slower a good deal than that by which the soft passion of love evaporates after it has once begun to fall away. Unfortunately, however, the fascinating countess had become fonder of him than ever; she con-

fessed that she never was happy without him ; and as to enduring the dreadful bore of shopping without having his delightful chit-chat to amuse her the while, it was quite out of the question ! But though fully conscious of this flattering excess of partiality on her part, the young man, in all the thoughtless wantonness of youth, had, with little or no preparation, disclosed to her the heart-rending fact of his almost immediate departure.

“ Am I then to see you no more, Edward ? ” she exclaimed with tender earnestness.

“ Oh dear yes,” he replied, “ very often, I hope. To-morrow I am going to dine with some men at ‘ La Favorite ; ’ but you may depend upon my calling on you, my sweet friend, the morning after, and then, dear Arabella, we must consult about future meetings.”

“ The day after to-morrow,” she repeated ; “ oh, that is very long ! But you will not fail me then, dear Edward ? You will be sure to come ? ”

Whereupon he reassured her gentle heart by an oath—kissed her hand—and departed, whistling “ Rory O’More.”

The young gentleman kept his oath. On the

day after the morrow he came again, but instead of being welcomed by the charming countess in person, he received the following note, put into his hand by the maid of the lodging house, with something very like a broad grin.

“ My husband, my tyrant husband, is about to drag me from Baden and from you ! Imagine my despair, and pity it ! Gracious Heaven ! is it possible ! Is that hateful rumbling the sound of the diligence, into which within five minutes I must throw myself, in order to be dragged away from the only man who ever possessed my heart ? He comes—he comes ! Farewell, Edward ! Oh, a long farewell ! But, perhaps, not for ever !

“ ARABELLA.”

“ How very lucky ! ” exclaimed the unfeeling young man. “ I was desperately afraid that I should hear she was going to follow me.”

Before the day was half over, however, he discovered that not only a multitude of pretty things, the purchase of which he had certainly sanctioned during the first affectionate weeks of their inti-

macy, but a very alarming amount of other articles, had, as it now appeared, been set down at more than one shop to his account; which, added to the croupier's claims against him, formed a sum total that disagreeably startled him. There was little use, however, in reading and re-reading the items, or in swearing either at the pretty articles themselves, or at their pretty wearer; something more business-like must be done, and the best thing he could think of was to go to the shops with the bills in his hand, and demand, with a good deal of vehement indignation, how the devil they dared to send in bills to him with which he had nothing to do; concluding his spirited remonstrance by saying, "Do you take me for the countess's husband, you *scélérat*?"

"Assurément, non, monsieur," replied the master of the shop, with an obsequious smile.

"Then carry your bills to the person who is," returned Edward, in a blustering tone. "I should like to know what sort of law it must be, that could make me pay the bills of another man's wife."

"Come here, Arnold," said the master of the shop to a young man who was standing at the

opposite counter, "and you too, Ernest," he added, addressing another, who was lounging at the door. "Have you not, both of you, served this gentleman at different times with various articles ordered by him for use of Madame de Marquemont?"

"Yes," and "yes," replied stoutly and positively each of the persons applied to.

Edward knit his brows, stamped with his foot, nay, even clenched his fist, as he began a bullying reply; but the gentle, peaceful smile, with which the travelling Parisian mercer regarded him, stopped him short, and he concluded his remonstrance by muttering, "The word of your *garçons de boutique* will not be taken against mine."

"We shall be three to one, sir," replied the mercer, with another of his civil smiles; "besides, to be perfectly frank, monsieur, I have other evidence as to the nature of the transaction. I am perfectly prepared to prove before the tribunals that I was not in the habit of trusting Madame de Marquemont—nay, that I had positively refused to trust her three days only before the date of the first entry in this bill. It was you, sir, whom I trusted," he continued, with a bow of

profound respect. "If you remember, sir, the lady said, 'Do give your name, dear friend—the people don't know me.'"

Edward bit his lips. There was so much of able mimicry in the man's tone and manner, that the unlucky young Englishman, even if he had previously forgotten the fact, could not fail to have remembered the words when so repeated. "D'ailleurs, monsieur," resumed the courteous mercer, "your address, as well as your distinguished name and appearance, was quite a sufficient guarantee. We all know that none but the most illustrious families ever take the Balcony House—and every thing, you must be aware, monsieur, is immediately known in a little place like this—so different from Paris! There was not a tradesman in the town who did not immediately know that the Balcony family had hired a carriage for the summer, and were on terms of the most intimate friendship with Milor Lynberry and Milor Montgomery. Ah! monsieur, who would have a scruple of accepting your name as a guarantee! No one, *assurément!*—and accordingly, monsieur, it has been accepted by myself, as well as by all the other most fashionable *mar-*

chands at the Baths. Nor have we, any of us, the slightest fear that we shall find cause to regret our noble confidence !”

Mr. Edward Roberts had not a word more to say against a claim so every way well established. However, for consistency’s sake, he again knit his brows, and then said, “At any rate, you must wait a few days for it.”

The mercer again bowed low.

“Whenever it suited the convenience of monsieur,” he said. “Any time within the next week would be perfectly satisfactory to him. A family of such distinction as that of monsieur, could not leave Baden in the style that had suited Madame de Marquemont, who, *cependant, était, il faut l’avouer, une femme charmante.*”

With such satisfaction as could be derived from this opinion, the unfortunate Edward quitted the shop ; but found more solid consolation in the conviction that his father and mother would not leave him behind in a gaol, than even in the sympathetic admiration of the shop-keeper for Madame de Marquemont.

It was to his mother, therefore, that this pretty specimen of the English nation betook himself, in

order to find the means of confirming the French shop-keeper's favourable opinion of himself and his *distinguished* family; and he certainly found, notwithstanding the astounding demand for fresh supplies that he brought upon her, that he was right in conjecturing that he should not be left behind in a gaol. Mrs. Roberts, however, did begin to feel that a few more months passed like the three last would bring her pecuniary affairs into rather a desperate condition; and therefore having distinctly answered Edward's distinct question of "Do you intend, ma'am, to leave me here to rot in a gaol?" in the negative—which answer, by the way, she gave as promptly as distinctly, for her son looked at her as she asked the question with such wide-open round eyes, that she was quite frightened—she ventured to hint that the sooner he put himself in possession of Miss Harrington's fortune, the better it would certainly be for himself and his family, as he must, by this time, be aware.

"And the thing shall be done, ma'am," he replied, "as soon after we leave this cursed place, as you shall be pleased to put the needful quantity of tin into my hands. An old woman—I beg

your pardon, ma'am—may not be quite as much up to all the turnings and twistings of such a job as a young man—'twould not be quite fair to expect it ; but yet, mother, I won't believe that you are such a fool as not to know that a man cannot get through it without a good fist-full of ready money. As soon as you can manage to scratch together a hundred pounds for me, after these d—d debts are paid, I will turn your hateful Miss Bertha into Mrs. Edward Roberts in no time."

Although these conditions were by no means unreasonable, they were by no means easy—and Mrs. Roberts fairly groaned.

"Oh ! very well, ma'am," resumed the young gentleman. "I am by no means in a hurry about it, I assure you. I will not deny that, as things seem to be going, the scheme which, as I shall manage it, cannot fail, may be convenient ; but nevertheless, it is too disagreeable for me to be at all in a hurry about it. It is *you* who are to look out about it, remember, and not I. All I can say is, if you will furnish the money, I will marry the girl. And if that does not content you, I can't help it."

"It does, it does content me," replied his mother, eagerly, "and the money *shall* be forthcoming, if I guide your father's hand to make him draw for it!"

"And when am I to have the cash that is to free me from the gripe of all the rascals here?" demanded the young gentleman.

"Nay, it must be done at once, Edward," replied his mother. "Your father has got into a queer sort of care-for-nothing way lately, which will make getting another draft easy enough. Though it is not very pleasant, either, to see him do what one asks, just as if he was asleep."

"Dear me, ma'am," returned her lively son, "I should have thought that must be the pleasantest possible state in which to find him, when he was required to transact business—unless, indeed, he could be brought to such a desirable state of lucidity as to give his signature when he was asleep outright."

"For shame, Edward! How can you talk so!" replied the conscientious mother. "You know, my dear, I have always made it a most particular point with you and your sisters, that you should always treat your father with the greatest respect.

He is a very good man, Edward, though perhaps he may not be quite as bright as his children. But it is not his fault, remember, if he had not quite such a mother as you have had."

The sneer with which this well-brought-up youth turned on his heel, and concluded the interview, was an offering from his heart to both his parents, and might, without falsifying his feelings, have been divided very equally between them.

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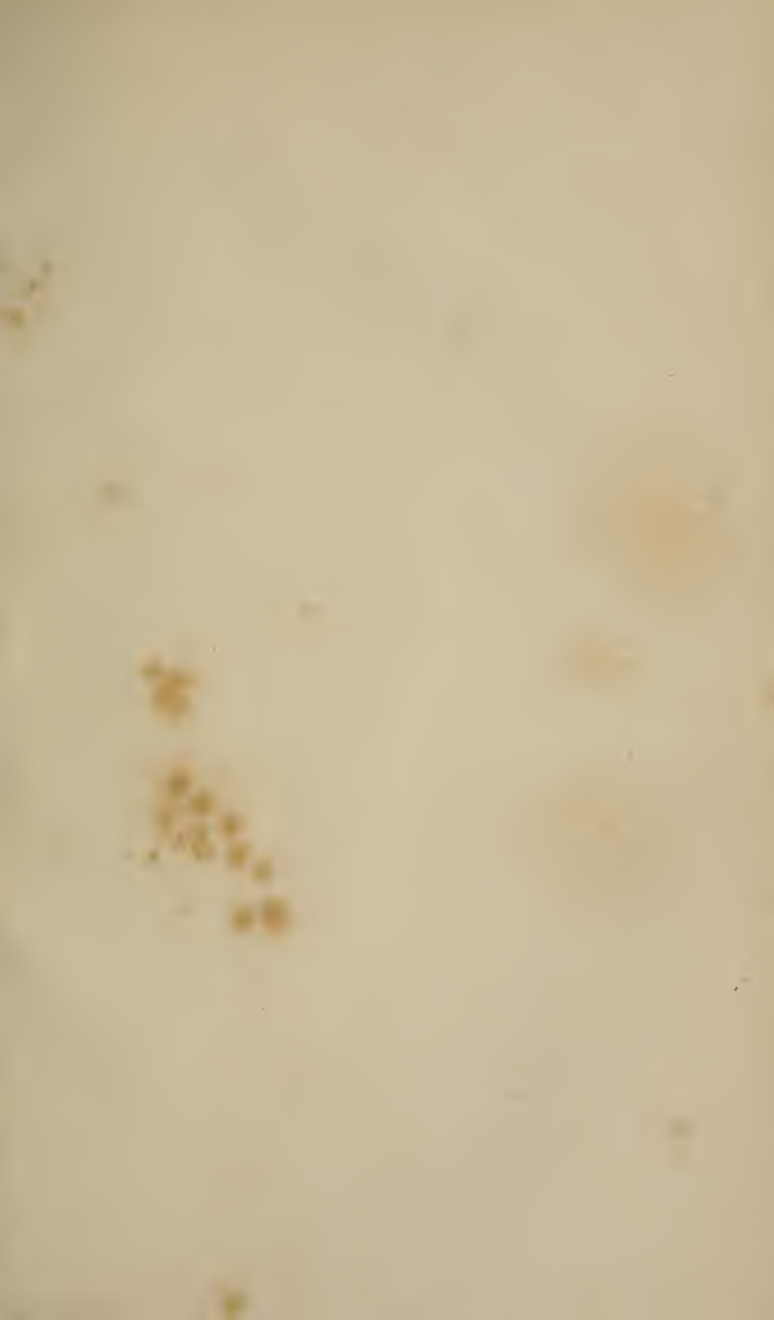
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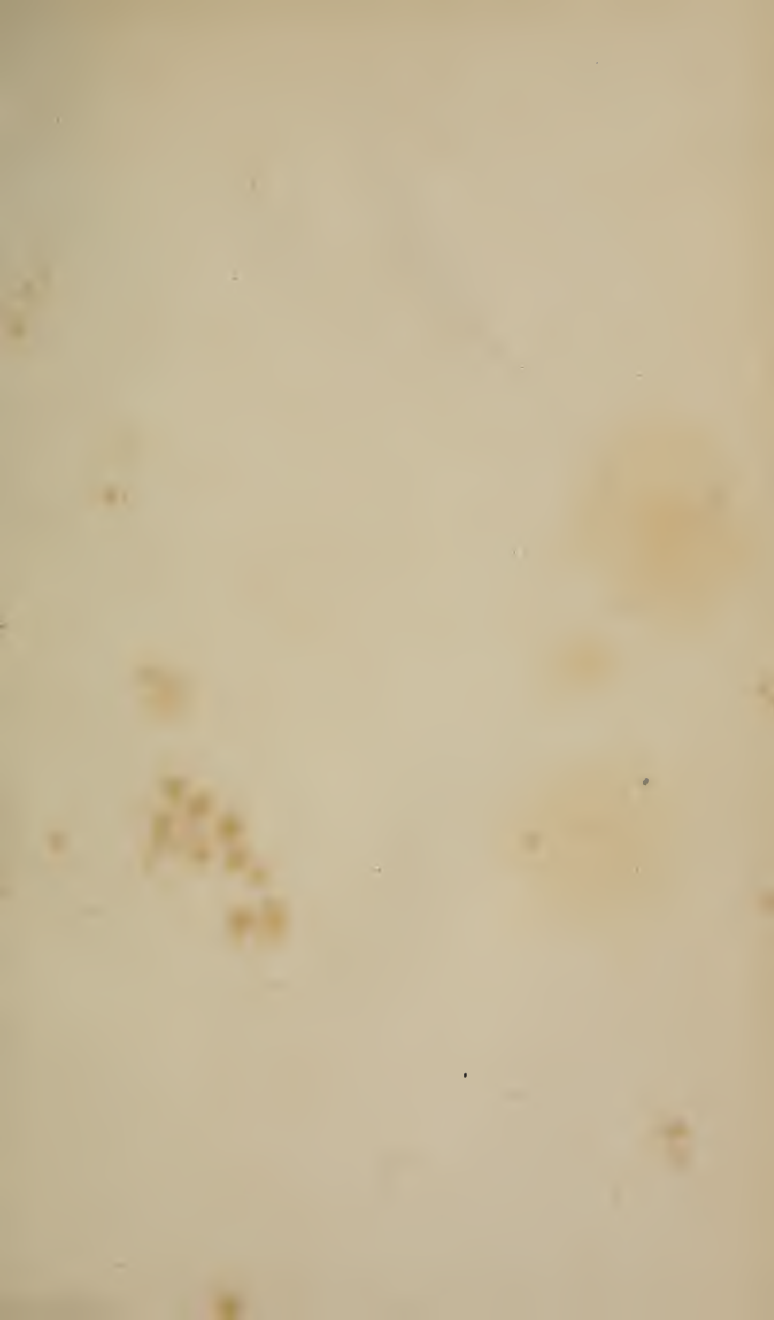
All that now remained to be done before again packing themselves into the identical veterino equipage which had conveyed them to Baden, was to take a proper leave of Agatha's illustrious friend the Princess Fuskymuskoff. They parted fondly, and with mutual regret; the princess was in every respect exactly such a friend as suited Miss Agatha; and Miss Agatha was in every respect exactly such a friend as suited the princess. So they mutually promised a punctual correspondence by letter; and the princess very positively declared, that if she were fortunate enough to obtain a prolonged leave of absence from the Emperor of Russia and the prince her husband, she should certainly pass the next

winter in the same capital as her friend. She then put a little diamond ring upon the finger of the enchanted Agatha, kissed her on both cheeks, and dismissed her. And so ended the campaign of the Robertses at Baden-Baden.

END OF VOL. II.













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